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To make the short story long:
the development of the frame-story structure in Sanskrit narrative

The Vedic and Epic models

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki in lecture room PIII on the 18th of January, 2019 at 12 o'clock.

ISBN 978-951-51-4769-1 (print)
ISBN 978-951-51-4770-7 (PDF)
https://ethesis.helsinki.fi

Unigrafia Oy
Helsinki 2018

Abstract

The dissertation is interdisciplinary: it is divided between South Asian studies (material, philological methods) and comparative literature (methods of narratology). Its special area is Sanskrit literature. It investigates the first frame structures in Vedic literature (ca. 1200 - 500 BCE) and follows the development of the frame to the age of the epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* (ca. 400 BCE - 300 CE).

The material consists of Vedic hymns and later Vedic texts, mainly of commentaries (*Brāhmaṇas*), and the two epics mentioned above. The "*omphalos*" and dialogue hymns of the *Ṛgveda* and complex narratives embedded in the *Brāhmaṇas* receive special attention, and later on the emphasis is on the frames, levels and narrators of the *Mahābhārata*. In the analysis methods of narratology are used, most of all theories and concepts concerning frame structures, with reference to such theorists as Wolf Schmid, Monika Fludernik and William Nelles. Samples from chosen texts are analysed paying attention to narrative technique, narrative levels, narrators, narratees and narrative situation. The questions of text types, defitions of the frame and the narrative, and the literalization of oral tradition are also discussed in the light of the material.

Thus far there have not been any comprehensive studies of the history of frame in India. The aim of this work has been to provide one for the Vedic and pre-Classical era. It shows that framing structures are found already in Vedic literature, and that this literary strategy has roots in continuous tradition of preserving texts inside other texts. This means criticizing and refuting a theory according to which the frame device was copied from Vedic rituals. These results are reached by the narratological analysis mentioned above and by comparing early examples of Vedic literature with later Vedic and epic texts.

The study gives information of various types, uses and functions of the frame, introduces a new theory of "tripartite narrative strategy" that is the basis of narration in the *Mahābhārata* and proposes three models for the literary frame in India: the Vedic, the Epic and the conversational frame. The last one is "a master model" which challenges the standard definitions of the narrative and the frame.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my learned supervisors, Professor Xenia Zeiler and Associate Professor Klaus Karttunen, from the University of Helsinki, for their continuous interest, support and criticism of my work. I am greatly indebted to Professor Emeritus Asko Parpola, who together with Dr. Karttunen guided me through my graduate studies in Sanskrit language and literature and Indian culture at the University of Helsinki. I also wish to thank my friend and colleague, lic. phil. Petteri Koskikallio for his help and support; Professor Emeritus Hannu K. Riikonen for his interest and notes on my MA thesis, which have been useful also for this work; Professor Edwin Gerow for his acute criticism on the early phase of my dissertation; and Professor Pekka Tammi for his insightful lectures which first introduced me the discipline of narratology. At the final stage, when revising the manuscript, I have benefited enormously from the comments of the pre-examiners of the dissertation, Professor Markku Lehtimäki (the University of Turku) and Dr. Renate Söhnen-Thieme (SOAS).

At the university of Helsinki I have for several years been happy to participate in the program for postgraduate students. I have been privileged to enjoy the sympathetic help and advice of the counsellors of postgraduate studies at the University of Helsinki, and I am especially grateful for the eager response, criticism and encouragement that my project received in the discussions during the Summer School of the Doctoral programme of History and Cultural Heritage in August 2015, presided by Professor Kirsi Saarikangas. I thank cordially the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the Emil Aaltonen Foundation, and The Soroptimist International Finland for funding my research.

My warmest thanks go to my family for their patience and positive spirit. Professor Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila (University of Edinburgh) has not only given me his untiring support but also put his expertise in scholarly criticism and discourse to my service. Maria Hämeen-Anttila, a doctoral student at the University of Helsinki since 2017, has been a regular partner in inspiring discussions about methods and theories in humanities. She and my son Maxwell kept my spirits up during the last strenuous lap of the editing the manuscript.

A note on translations and transcriptions

The translations from the Sanskrit and Pāli are my own unless otherwise indicated. In them I have used critical editions mentioned in the chapter 1.2., which describes the material, and in the list of "text and translations" in the bibliography. Longer text examples are given in separate sections. I have not included original Sanskrit or Pāli texts, because exact wordings are rarely relevant when one studies structures of texts. It also would have taken too much space to provide a double amount of textual examples, many of which I need to quote in full because they are not easily available for narratologists. But in some details, especially when discussing Vedic material, I have made an exception. The names of the works and important literary or cultural terms are given in Sanskrit and marked with italics.

The transcription of Sanskrit follows the usual system: a macron indicates a long vowel (ā, ī, ū), e and o being naturally long; ś is a palatal sibilant, ṭ, ḍ and ṣ are cerebrals (pronounced with the tongue curled back and touching the palate); c is a voiceless palatal fricative (pronounced like the "ch" in *church*) and j the corresponding voiced one (as the "j" in *journal*); ch and jh are these phonemes with an added aspiration; n has velar, palatal and dental allophones (ṅ, ñ and n); ṃ is a homorganic nasal regulated by the following consonant; ṛ is a vowel, usually pronounced with a weak i or u (as in the Ṛgveda with initial r^{i}), and ḥ is an unvoiced aspirant that replaces an original s or r at the end of the word or a morpheme.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The background and the aims of this study

One particular structural device has dominated narrative texts in old Indian literature: the frame story. If one wanted to collect several narratives within one work, the solution has always been the frame. It is present everywhere and in many forms in the *Mahābhārata*, the two-thousand-year-old national epic of India, and repeated in its smaller cousin, equally influential *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is used in the *Pañcatantra*, a somewhat later, immensely popular collection of stories, to such a measure that there are many embeddings on the fourth and fifth level in this text. And as the device was exported to the medieval Middle East by translations of *Pañcatantra* as early as in the 6th to 8th centuries CE and started a vogue there, and later in medieval Europe, it may well be that the Indian frame eventually provided the model for the well-known story-within-a-story structure of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

But where did the frame come from to those early texts of India? This question has not attracted much attention, and in my opinion it has not yet been adequately answered.

This study seeks to patch this hole by tracing the development of the Indian frame narrative from its beginnings up to the Classical age, i.e. the period when classical Sanskrit language as it was codified by the grammar of Pāṇini[1] became the predominant medium of the secular "court literature" (*kāvya*).[2] It concentrates on the first appearances of framing technique in the Vedic age (ca. 1000 - 500 BCE) in the Ṛgvedic hymns and later exegetical texts called *Brāhmaṇas*, and follows the history of the frame to the age of

[1] The grammarian Pāṇini composed his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* ("Eight Chapters") around 300 BCE. At this time the Sanskrit was no longer "a spoken language" even though it was in active use as a literary language (see chapter 2.1.2.). Pāṇini's work crystallized the rules of Sanskrit grammar in short *sūtras* (aphoristic clauses) that use "shorthand" notation to make the rules as clear and generative as possible. It surpassed earlier treatises in authority and became the standard of polished language for authors in the beginning of the common era.

[2] The concept of *kāvya* will also be discussed in more detail in the chapter 2.1.2.

the great epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* (ca. 400 BCE - 200 CE).[3] The subject matter is theoretically intricate and the material abundant, and so it must be emphasized that this is not a complete history, but a survey of roots, structures and continuities of the Indian frame narrative and an attempt to sketch formal models of frame for each literary phase.

The study arises from many years of reading and thinking. It has proceeded backwards, because the starting-point for it was a Finnish translation[4] of the so-called *Textus Ornatior* of the *Pañcatantra* (1199: a late Classical work). It was followed by a Master's thesis dealing with the four main Sanskrit versions of the *Pañcatantra*[5]. The MA thesis compared the structural and thematic solutions of the versions and essayed to find "a theory" for the Sanskrit prose narrative. This was not paid much attention to in Sanskrit literary criticism, which concentrated on poetry and drama. The material was set against the grid of contemporary native theories, whereas the methods were taken from traditional philology (South Asian studies) and narratology (comparative literature). This combination of theoretical tools is used in a modified form also in this study.

The MA thesis discussed the frame stories of the *Pañcatantra* as a part of the textual analysis. Soon the frame as such became the centre of my interest. A couple of articles had proposed a theory for its origin in India[6]. This was what I call in this study "the ritual model" or "the ritual explanation", for the idea was that the frame story structure was copied from the structure of Vedic rituals. The theory was accepted without criticism and repeated in many studies.[7] For a literary scholar, however, it did not seem satisfactory, and I felt that there was a need for a more complete investigation of the early

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[3] This classification of periods is broad, and because of overlappings it is difficult to give exact dates. Here it concerns literature, but it is also connected to cultural and historical developments. The Vedic period can be defined by the language (Vedic Sanskrit and pre-Classical Sanskrit) and the religious content of the texts (Vedic religion and rituals). The Epic period is the age of "Epic Sanskrit", used in the *Mahābhārata*, which does not conform to the rules of Pāṇini. The later part of the period is synchronous with the early works of the *kāvya* period, and this is seen also in the form of the language. The boundaries have been drawn both by chronology and by genre and cultural and textual connections. So the last works discussed in this study are the *Jātakas*, as the first "cycle of stories" (2nd century BCA - 5th century CA), and the Veda-oriented *Bṛhaddevatā* (1st to 5th centuries CE). The *Purāṇas,* although they continue the tradition of the *Mahābhārata*, have been left out, because as a group they are later (3rd to 10th centuries CE).

[4] *Viisi kirjaa viisaita satuja: intialainen Pañcatantra*. Suomentanut (translated into Finnish by) Virpi Hämeen-Anttila. Suomen itämaisen seuran suomenkielisiä julkaisuja 24. Helsinki 1995.

[5] *Viewpoints to a Poetics of Narrative in Ancient Indian Literature: A Study of the main Sanskrit Versions of the Pañcatantra*. 248 p. Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Helsinki. Helsinki 1996. I hope to incorporate the essence of this work in future into a study that continues the history of the frame to the Classical age.

[6] Witzel 1987, Minkowski 1989; 1991. See especially 2.4. and 3.6. below.

[7] I have not found any other serious objection to the theory than Söhnen-Thieme 2005, which comments Witzel's hypothesis by stating that "there is a narrative logic that is quite different from ritual logic" (2005: 438 n. 6).

literature. I wanted find out whether it could be proved that the model for the frame could be found in the development of the texts. This objective was visible in an article on the Śunaḥśepa legend, which is included in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.*[8] In the article I called "the ritual model" "too formalistic and too reductionist"[9], and envisioned an alternative theory that would embrace recycled texts of many kinds: narrative, ritual, didactic and philosophical ones.[10]

In this study this alternative theory will be sketched in more detail and supported by evidence from early literature. Accordingly, the aims of the study are, in short, finding out (i) when, how and why the frame structure originated, (ii) how it was used in the early narratives and (iii) how it developed from its beginnings to become the one and only way to tell stories.

The first chapters introduce the background, material and methods of the study (1.1. - 1.3.) and give a concise survey of the previous research on the subject (1.4.). To search for the roots of the frame it was necessary to go to the oldest Indian literature: the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. This material presents special problems that are discussed in 2.1. The chapter 2.2. searches for levels and narrators in these texts and analyse the structures of some types of hymns, paying special attention to the "*omphalos*" and dialogue (*saṃvāda*) hymns. The later Vedic age is represented by the narratives found in the *Brāhmaṇas*, exegetical works that bind the Vedic rituals to the hymns (chapter 2.3.) From these the narratives of Śunaḥṣepa and Cyavana were chosen as primary examples, as they have many levels and different kinds of embeddings.[11] Other examples are taken up beside these to give the discussion depth and width. The question of the ritual origin of the frame is discussed in 2.4., the analysis of the levels and the narrators of the Vedic texts is summed up in 2.5., and the chapter 2.6. introduces "the conversational frame" which is typical of many early Indian texts and for its part clarifies the question of the definition of frame.

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[8] Hämeen-Anttila 2001. This text can be dated to the 7th or 6th century BCE. In the article there was ethos of reconciliation between "the analytic/generic vs. synchronic/hermeneutic" approaches which I wish to retain also in this study. The text is treated and analysed as an organic whole, but also the sources and influences that have gone into its making are recognized to make note of the continuation of both structures and motifs. See chapters 1.3. and 3.1. below.

[9] Hämeen-Anttila 2001: 207.

[10] I read a paper which dealt with this text-centred model in the 12th World Sanskrit Conference in Helsinki, July 2003. Unfortunately the paper, "Some notes on the origin of the frame-story device in Sanskrit literature", is not available in print, although I have found references to it (e.g. in Taylor 2007). I hope that those who were interested in the paper will find their way to this study which has grown from that small seed.

[11] Hämeen-Anttila 2001: 201-206; Witzel 1987: 381-385.

The section 3 is devoted to the epic frame. Within it the analysis of the frames, levels and narrators of the *Mahābhārata* takes up most of the space, because this text both uses much that has been invented before and makes innovations that were adopted by later authors. Indeed, the introductory meanderings and endless digressions and repetitions can be regarded as a wild experiment that was made to see how far the possibilities of the frame can be streched. There are two outer frames, of which the first is of special interest. The embeddings in this complex text[12] show great variation, ranging from long novellas such as the narratives of Nala and Sāvitrī to extensive theological and ethical passages such as the *Bhagavadgītā* and the "Dharma" section of the books 12 and 13. In addition to these embeddings there is the eye-witness reportage of the charioteer Saṃjaya (in the "War" section of the books 6-9), which is also a frame, and the main plot of the epic is at times so episodic that it forms not a continuum, but a chain of narratives of wonder and adventure. All these features give valuable information about the development of the frame story.

In the chapter 3.4. the ritual model is reconsidered in the light of the preceding analysis, and in 3.5. three other examples of frame narratives of the Epic age are introduced for comparison. Both the Vedic and the Epic sections are concluded by giving a model, or variant models, for the frame structure of each age (chapters 2.7. and 3.6.). They show the type of frame that was in use and summarize its salient features so that the models can be compared.[13] The results of the study are summed up in the chapter 4.[14]

The overall agenda of this study is to put the history of the frame story in India into a bigger picture: to make it part of the discussion of the frame in narratology and other literary studies. I do not want to return to the extravagancies of some 19th century Indologists and claim that the frame story was born in India once and for all and frames in other literatures are borrowings and copies. The long embedded narrative of Ulysses

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[12] The presentation of the material in this section has been a problem. E.g. the architecture of the first of the outer frames of the *Mahābhārata* is so challenging that to force myself to tackle it and explain it to scholars that are not Indologists, I made it the subject of my paper in the summer school of the doctoral programme at the Helsinki University in the year 2015. The paper, which I read in a session chaired by Mieke Bal, raised interest and lead to lively discussions both during the session and in our free time. This encouraged me and convinced me of the importance of widening the perspective of the studies of comparative literature to this direction.

[13] For the sake of clarity, and also to better suit the purposes of this work, I use the word "epic" here, even though it would be more accurate to talk about " the *itihāsa* model" or "the epic-purāṇic model".

[14] The Classical frame that follows the Epic frame (in the works like the *Pañcatantra*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*. *Daśakumāracarita* etc.) is touched here only in passing. It would need a separate study which I hope, as said above, to be able to complete in future. I have wanted to concentrate on the early manifestations of the frame and stop "in the middle", at the point where the frame structure is established and triumphant (the *Mahābhārata*).

in the Phaeacian court is a well-known counter-example.[15] Still the fact remains that most theorists of comparative literature are not able to appreciate Indian contribution to the frame story enough, because their knowledge of it is derived from secondary sources which are often not well informed. For this reason I would be happy if my study would make at least some of them aware of the sophistication and theoretical value of old Indian narratives.[16] With this in mind, I apologize for the fact that many things that seem trivial to Indologists will be explained. A text thick with impenetrable terminology and cryptic references would alienate many whom the subject interests. Besides, in regard to the *Ṛgveda* and the *Mahābhārata* the ideal of "knowing it all" is not realistic: only those who have devoted their scholarly life exclusively to one of the two huge areas can fulfill it.

An essential part of this study is to analyse the structures and elements that the Indian frame story employs, most of all the narrative levels and the narrators, and this is done by using the tools of narratology. Modern literary methodology is needed if one wishes to communicate with scholars of literature, but it is practical for other reasons also: unlike some other methods, those of narratology are applicable to this particular structure, and they serve well the aims of this study. The choice of methods is described and explained in 1.3. below and supplemented by a more detailed discussion on the frame in 2.1.1.

To sum up, this study was written with the design that it would be of interest and importance for the scholars of South Asian studies as well as to those of comparative literature. There is a need of a work of serious scholarship dedicated to general history of the Indian frame story.[17] The Indian frame narratives have so far been analyzed by looking at one text at a time, not setting them into a context of historical continuum or discussing them as a group, with common features and functions. The background of scholars of South Asian culture has included linguistic, ethnologic and religio-historical studies but usually not sustained perusal of modern literary theories, and this has sometimes coloured their views. There has been relatively little activity around the frame story. This is

[15] The Books 9-12 in the *Odyssey*. Also the tales of the Trojan war that are sung in the court by the bard Demodocus are embedded narratives.

[16] Theories cannot be called "general" if they are suitable for describing only modern Western literature. The boundaries of "world's classics" and "comparative literature" have been checked since the 1980s, but many new visions of "global literature" are based on theoretical and often political agendas which tend to close out older literature of non-Western cultures, supposing that it is bound to traditions that are equally repressive as the former west-centered model of literature. Of the problems of "world literature", see e.g. Damrosch 2009. Cf. however p. 37.

[17] See e.g. Maten 1981: 252, on the quest of the original *Pañcatantra* by means of narratological analysis of the extant versions; Nelles 1997: 1-2; 163: n. 1 on the need and the supreme difficulty of providing a history of embedded narrative.

surprising, as it seems to be not only one device among others used by the Indian writers but during very long periods of history the only way to tell a story in India. The question why the frame is both noted and ignored may be too large to have a definite answer. The frame story is in the centre of Indian narrative literature, but perhaps its omnipresence has made it invisible.

By and large the literary theory in the west has touched Indian narratives briefly and superficially. Therefore the field of narratology will profit from a full-length study which is totally based on material from a different literary tradition and a different age than the discipline usually deals with. The narratologists could update some of their views and even get new ideas. It is also useful for them to know that an ancient narrative of another culture can display textual tricks that are connected with modern or post-modern Western literature. Too often have the walls of specialization shut the Indian frame from their view and accordingly, from their writing and discussion.[18] The situation can be amended by interdisciplinary studies.

1.2. The material

The Indian sources are composed in Sanskrit.[19] The only exception are the *Jātakas*, discussed in the chapter 3.5. Their language is Pāli, a literary Prākrit[20] used by early Buddhists. All the examples are translated into English, because the emphasis of this study is on the structure of the text, which can be inspected and analyzed also in translation. This also makes the discussion for non-Indologists easier to follow. For the

[18] There are many works that concentrate e.g. on the outer frames of the *Mahābhārata*, but nearly all of them are for specialist readers. The most readable introduction is Earl (2011). It has been of a great help for me even in this late phase of my studies. Perhaps it is not so humiliating to make this confession: I believe nobody knows or understands this huge work even partially unless they devote their whole scholarly life to it.

[19] "Sanskrit" refers in this study to all the forms of this literary language from its first documented sources (Vedic Sanskrit of the *Ṛgveda*, c. 1200-1000 BCE) to Classical Sanskrit (from the grammar of Pāṇini (see above) to the 16th century CE), although Vedic Sanskrit and Classical Sanskrit differ in many ways and the texts that chronologically fall in between, e.g. the *Mahābhārata*, represent various intermediary phases of the language.

[20] Prākrits were formalized languages based on spoken dialects, which were used occasionally in literature. Besides Pāli the most important of these was Mahārāṣṭrī, the language of the *Sattasāī*, an early influential collection of lyric poetry.

same reason I have included in the description of the material also the translations of the works that are studied.

Here I give only the editions and translations on which the study is based. The detailed description of the material is found in the beginning of the chapters dealing with particular works. They are more useful there, and in this way repetition of same facts is avoided.

The chapter 2 begins with a discussion of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* (1200 - 1000 BCE).[21] For the text of the *Ṛgveda* I have used mainly the edition of Theodor Aufrecht[22]. For a long time there was no satisfactory complete English translation, only selections,[23] and the odd Victorian concoction done by Griffith[24]. Now there is one by Jamison and Brereton[25] which I have consulted when necessary. The German translation by Geldner is still usable[26] and a new one is being published in by Witzel and Gotō.[27]

The other half of the chapter deals with later Vedic literature. The Cyavana story is found in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. These two contain also other stories which I refer to. The story of Śunaḥśepa is in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. The text of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* I use was edited by Aufrecht in 1879.[28] There is an English translation by A. B. Keith, published in 1920.[29] For the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* I have used the critical edition of the Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra[30]. The works of Caland[31], Bodewitz[32] and O'Flaherty[33] contain partial translations of the text. In many cases I have had to resort to their expertise, because the original text is difficult and lacks commentary. For reference, I have also consulted the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* and Caland's English translation (especially the notes) of it;[34] this work belongs to the *Sāmaveda* branch as the *Jaiminiya*. For the

[21] The age of the *Ṛgveda* and its contents are discussed in chapter 2.1.
[22] Aufrecht 1955 (1877).
[23] E.g. O'Flaherty 1984 (1981).
[24] The translation of Griffith is available in the net. It is of little use for even a layman, as it is muddled and erratic.
[25] Jamison and Brereton 2015. This translation is an admirable achievement which has filled a yawning gap, but the trouble is that there is no critical apparatus, and in most cases the introductions to each hymn are not enough to clarify why a certain reading has been adopted. The authors, however, have promised to put critical notes into a special website in future.
[26] Geldner 1951.
[27] Witzel and Gotō 2007, 2013. This translation is supplied with philological notes.
[28] Aufrecht 1879.
[29] Keith 1920.
[30] Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra 1954.
[31] Caland 1919.
[32] Bodewitz 1990.
[33] O'Flaherty 1985.
[34] Sastri 1935, Caland 1931.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the *Śukla* (White) *Yajurveda*, I use Weber's edition.[35] There is an English translation by Eggeling, old-fashioned for its language but fairly reliable.[36] I will also refer to some narrative features in the *Upaniṣads*. There are many editions and translations of them: the edition I use here is Olivelle's collection of the early *Upaniṣads*, which has both the text and the translation.[37] The modern and accurate English translation by Roebuck has also been helpful.[38]

The second part of the study concentrates on the *Mahābhārata*. The "Vulgate Edition" has c. 200 000 lines. The "Critical Edition" is shorter with c. 146 000 lines. In this study I have chosen to use the Critical Edition.[39] There is no complete English translation of it. Van Buitenen has translated the beginning[40], and there are various abridged translations, of which that of John D. Smith[41], published in the Penguin Classics series, is fluent, accurate and useful. An English translation of the Vulgate Edition by K. M. Ganguli is available in the net.[42] The Clay Library series translation of the *Mahābhārata*, not yet completed, has also been made of the Vulgate, as it is nowadays seen as a useful companion to the Critical Edition: the parts that the editors of the latter have taken to be interpolations allow the reader to better perceive the historical dimensions of the work.[43]

Apart from the *Mahābhārata*, I make some notes about the other great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. I have used the critical edition of Bhatt (general editor)[44], and the English translations by Goldman, Pollock, Lefeber and others published in the Princeton Library series[45] and in the Clay Sanskrit Library series.[46] For the *Jātakas* or the "birth stories", the edition used is that of Fausbøll[47], and an English translation has been provided by Cowell[48]. The *Bṛhaddevata* has been edited and translated into English by A. A.

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[35] Weber 1964 (1849). Also available in the net. This is the version of the Mādhyandina school. The version of the Kāṇva school has been edited by W. Caland and Raghu Vira (1939).
[36] Eggeling 1966 (1882-1890). This is available also in the net.
[37] Olivelle 1998.
[38] Roebuck 2003.
[39] By Sukthankar et al 1959 (1933), also called the Poona edition.
[40] Van Buitenen 1973, 1978.
[41] Smith 2009.
[42] Ganguli 2004 (1883-1896).
[43] See e.g. Earl 2011: 1-3.
[44] Bhatt 1962-2001.
[45] Goldman et al (1984-)
[46] 2005-, The Clay Library translations are essentially the same as those that have earlier appeared in the Princeton Library series.
[47] Fausbøll 1962, 1963.
[48] Cowell 1993 (1895-1907).

Macdonell.[49] In the excerpt taken from the *Tantrākhyāikā* (an early text belonging to the *Pañcatantra* cycle) I have used Hertel's edition.[50] He has also translated the text into German.

1.3. The methods and theoretical premises

A few things about the methods used in this study have already been mentioned in first chapter. There I talked about an interdisciplinary approach, which combines traditional philology and modern literary theory. It is time to clarify this scheme.

My MA thesis was so catholic that it took into account also the classical Indian literary disciplines of *alaṃkāraśāstra* (the theory of literary tropes such as the simile and the metaphor)[51] and *nāṭyaśāstra* (the theory of drama). In the basic text of the latter, the 5th century CE theatrical manual *Bhāratīya Nāṭyaśāstra*[52], of special interest for the study of narrative are chapters on the plot and the theory of the *rasas*, aesthetic moods.[53] In the MA thesis I wanted to see if there would be a theory of narrative found in these texts. The handbooks mention *itihāsas*, *ākhyānas* and *kathās* and other words that have the meaning "story" as a class of texts, but their structure or nature is not discussed any further. Narratives showed certain defining characteristics, but they were "given", not a subject of critical scrutiny. The reason for the lack of interest was an implicit notion that narratives were "entertainment", not "literature".[54] They put the plot and action in the foreground instead of cultivating ornamental expression and the poetical momentum, the

[49] Macdonell 1904. Macdonell's reading of the *Bṛhaddevatā* have been corrected by Patton (1996), and I have read the text mostly through Patton's emendations.
[50] Hertel 1915. The German translation: Hertel 1909.
[51] There is a long tradition of studies in the field of the *alaṃkāraśāstra*, beginning with the parts the *Nāṭyaśāstra* which deal with style and aesthetics and the treatises of Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Vāmana and Uḍbhata (7th to 9th century CE) and culminating in the *dhvani* ("suggestion") theory of Ānandavardhana and the synthesis of Mammaṭa in the 10th and 11th century. The Indian contribution to the study of style, semantics and literary language is still undeservedly little known in the West (see p. 37, however). The best general histories are Gerow 1977 and De 1960.
[52] The original text: Nagar (3rd ed. 1994). There are several English translations. The one by Rangacharya (1986) is most practical.
[53] Except for the plot and the types of drama and all that goes with these, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* does not deal with the structure of the literary work. This is the case also with the later literary critics. Therefore no references to framing and similar textual strategies are to be found in these texts. This is not surprising, as they were not noted in the Western literary theory either before the rise of structuralism.
[54] The bias is naturally been present also in other literary cultures. The idea behind it is that anyone can tell a story, but literature is the area of specialists.

features that define the *belles lettres* (*kāvya*).[55] This attitude was rarely voiced, but it can be detected in aesthetic rules that eminent literary critics formulated.[56] Purely narrative texts had lower prestige also in the earliest literature, which cultivated only that which was sacred.[57]

In this study I will not use the apparatus of the classical Indian literary theories, but I will discuss the system of literary genres and the position of narrative in Indian literary theory in the chapter 2.1.2, taking up the problems described above. The native perspective shows also when the purpose, evaluation and transmission of the texts is discussed. After having been composed, the texts have had their preservers, transmitters and modifiers, as well as the intended audience. These are not always clear, so they must be reconstructed.

In regard to modern literary theories, in my MA thesis I used a solid but by now somewhat dated package of terms and methods developed by late structuralists and early narratologists, such as Gérard Genette[58], Mieke Bal[59] and Seymour Chatman[60]. These were applied to the versions of the *Pañcatantra* in an heuristic way, to see if they worked as analytic tools for an old text of a different culture. Although the results were in some cases meagre,[61] the part that dealt with the frame and the narrators was a breakthrough, and this directed my interest to them. Some ideas of the "forerunners" mentioned above are still used as the basis of this work, but I try now to avoid mechanical or self-serving use of any theory or method. Fortunately the subject is now better suited for the method. In addition, since the early 1990s narratology has taken a shape that is better adaptable to a study like this. To mention the most liberal views, narratology is talked about in plural (narratologies)[62], and the impetus is not that of building and solidifying general theories,

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[55] Thus the narrative (*kathā*, *ākhyāna*) represents in Indian aesthetics a derivative genre that does not have its own theory but combines the master disciplines of *alaṃkāraśāstra* (for the poetical descriptions) and *nāṭyaśāstra* (for the construction of the plot and the characters).

[56] A wholesale condemnation of "plot" or narrative elements would have been awkward, as the *Nāṭyaśāstra* put its authority behind a well-constructed plot (see chapter 2.1). Also the best Classical dramas, e.g. those of Kālidāsa, Śūdraka, Bhavabhūti and Viśākhadatta, have action and melodrama, and short poetry can also be expertly plotted. The evaluation shows in the demand of ornamental language and descriptions. This is evident in the prose romance *Daśakumāracarita* by Daṇḍin, in which the exciting and colourful plot is braided inside an outer cover of ultra-long sentences and striking metaphors.

[57] See chapter 2.1.2.

[58] Genette 1980; 1988; 1992 (English translation 1997).

[59] Bal 1985; 1991.

[60] Chatman 1978.

[61] E.g. the analysis based on Genette's classes of narrative time in the *Pañcatantra*, for example, did not reveal anything new or important about the text.

[62] See Nünning 2003. This is the attitude prevalent e.g. in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, which is available in the net.

but asking pertinent questions about both narratives and narratology.[63] The field of narratology has expanded and old definitions and classifications have been given alternatives. It is not necessary to adhere to one rigid theoretical scheme: one can choose one's tools and methods from a large reservoir embracing various fields of interest to suit best one's special purposes.

Thus I have been able to make use of such areas of narratological studies which are connected to the frame structure. These are the study of the narrative (or diegetic) levels and the concepts of the narrator, narratee, narrative situation, and narrative time. Also the theories about metanarration and oral narration have been helpful. The problem of text types has required looking into theoretical discussion about narrativity and the definitions of a narrative (and consequently, of the frame). Those concepts and distinctions that are not relevant for pre-modern literature I have left aside (see below).

Because the centre of interest in this study is the frame, it will be tackled separately in the chapter 2.1.1. There I will take up the questions about its definition and the forms it can take, and explain what I mean when I speak about frame and framing in the following chapters. Here, to prepare the way, I will discuss the theoretical concepts that are connected to the frame or border on it.

The study of *narrative levels* means the analytic categorization of the parts of a narrative into a hierarchic or inclusive order according to their reciprocal position. The first classification was made by Gérard Genette[64], but I favour the more recent and less opaque terminology of Wolf Schmid, where the extra-, intra- and metadiegetic levels of narration of Genette are replaced with primary, secondary and tertiary levels and narrators.[65] Thus on the primary level a narrator tells a story, in which there can be a second-level narrator, who then tells his own narrative which takes place on a tertiary level. The appearance of the secondary level, traditionally called an embedding or an intercalation, changes the story of the primary level into a frame narrative.

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[63] Meister (2014) while summarizing the history of the narratology and narratological studies ends his essay with a series of questions about the status of his subject (" is narratology a tool, a method, a program, a theory, or is it indeed a discipline?"), leaves them unanswered and, instead, mentions recent tasks and challenges some of which narratology has faced successfully and many of which still need to be explored.

[64] I used Genette's classification in my MA thesis but the terms lead me often to wrong direction. Bal (1981: 45) renames Genette's metadiegetic level as a hypodiegetic, and refers to the level above it as the meta-level. These terms have been criticized, most of all the prefix *meta-* being used when talking about subordinated narrative levels.

[65] Schmid 2010: 67-70. I modify his categorization of narrators, however: see below.

Levels can be horizontal, when the same narrator tells a string of independent tales (as the primary narrator Sheherazade in the *Thousand and one Nights*) or there is a series of different narrators on the same narrative level (Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). Or they can be vertical, if the second-level narration contains a third-level narrator and his narrative (the lower levels in the *Thousand and One Nights* and in the *Pañcatantra*).[66] In the *Mahābhārata* and the *Pañcatantra* the vertical levels can go down to the fifth level.

The concept of *metanarration* concerns those boundaries between levels that are not clear-cut. The borders can be transgressed by a metalepsis.[67] Fuzzy edges, leaps between levels and reversals of chronology are frequent in early Indian narratives, especially in the *Mahābhārata*. The basic theory by Genette and categorizations provided by Marie-Laure Ryan[68] and Monica Fludernik[69] have been useful here, as well as the work of William Nelles, whose lead I have followed also in questions about narrative levels and narrators.[70] The idea of the text being self-reflexive and using textual "mirrors" to reflect itself is present in the two epics, and it is taken up in 3.3.3. and 3.5.1. This feature has been discussed in theoretical literature, but only when analysing modern works.[71]

Metanarration is contained within the idea of *narrative time*, which is especially relevant when analysing the *Mahābhārata*. Most theorists start with the two-part distinction of the "story time" and the "discourse time". The former refers to markers of the external, linear duration of time ("in the spring of the year 1911" (absolute), "last Tuesday" (relative)) in which the events take place. The latter contains the manipulations

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[66] The distinction between horizontal and vertical levels was first introduced by Nelles (1997: 132-137).
[67] Metalepsis is probably best described by Genette (1980 (1972): 234-235). It occurs when an actor (a narrator, a character or any part of the narrative universe) of one level "breaks the rule" by being present in an unrealistic way in the narrative of another level. "The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic and that the narrator and his narratees — you and I — perhaps belong to some narrative." (Genette 1980: 235). This bedazzlement caused by uncertainty is most acute in the *Mahābhārata*, where time is reversed and characters cross narrative levels without much ado. However, it may be that contemporary audience was not so suprised. See 3.3.3.
[68] Ryan 2006. Ryan's analysis is based on the division between *rhetorical metalepsis* and *ontological metalepsis*. The first concerns only the speech of the narrator which intrudes into another level for a short period. The second means a more radical shift, the actual presence of a character on two levels. Ryan has also developed the idea of stacks in describing the relation between the levels of the narrative, instead of the usual a tree-type hierarchy, but here I leave it aside.
[69] Fludernik 2003: 382-400. Fludernik uses a four-term typology which she believes is implicit in Genette's analysis, i.e. authorial ("Virgil kills Dido"), narratorial (the narrator invites the reader to the world of the narrative), lectorial (= the ontological metalepsis of Ryan) and rhetorical (= the rhetorical metalepsis of Ryan). See also Pier 2016.
[70] Nelles 1997.
[71] E.g. Dällenbach (1989). He refers to older narratives in the Appendix A of his work.

by which the "story time" is textually represented in the narration.[72] The problem of these, from the point of view of studying early Indian narratives, is the "story time", which in them may already be indefinite and/or warped. The standard analyses of the story, adhering to the mimetic basis of representation[73], do not usually take this into account.[74] In the analysis the anomalies are seen to belong to the "discourse time". A third parametre is "the narrating time": the chronology of the act of narrating itself.[75] Genette, again, has been the pioneer in the analysis of the internal chronology and anachrony of the narrative, and his work is the heuristic basis of more recent approaches.[76]

The narrator appears frequently in this study.[77] S/he can be found by answering the question: "Who is speaking?". In narratives that contain more than one level the identification of the narrator is necessary for the analysis of the structure. Genette's theory of the narrator is a part of his theory of the levels and its terminology (see above). I follow again Schmid (2010) and call Genette's extra-, intra- and metadiegetic narrators primary, secondary and tertiary narrators. However, I place them on different levels (see p. 21, 28).

Both Genette and Schmid distinguish between a primary narrator that is a character in his story and one who only tells the story from some more distant position. Genette calls these respectively homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators. I have chosen to use Schmid's terms which are diegetic (involved) and non-diegetic (non-involved) narrator, even though these are ambiguous when combined with other terms. Indian frame stories contain all of these, and it can be seen that the types become more clear-cut by the time. The *Mahābhārata* presents a special case with "Vyāsa", who is the author of the work and a character and an occasional narrator of embedded stories within it, and in addition a mythical composer of other literary works (see the chapter 3.3.2.).

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[72] This division goes back to the structuralist distinction between the story (the "real" linear and chronological action) and the discourse (the reorganization of the story to make a narrative). This two-part scheme for a narrative that has roots in the "deep structure" and "surface structure" of linguistic and cognitive processes seems to be so basic that it has not been contested, only refined. See Chatman 1978: 19-27.

[73] Mimetic means that the text refers ultimately to the real world as it is known to us.

[74] Richardson 2002: 42-58.

[75] For the three types mentioned here and time in narrative in general, see Scheffel et al 2014, which has been my main source in this matter.

[76] Genette 1980. Pier (2016) states: "Despite critical comments from proponents of postclassical approaches (e.g. Fludernik 1996; Gibson 1996; Dannenberg 2004, 2008), the Genettian system has been disseminated through pragmatic versions of this heuristic classification." Usually the basis of the discussion are modern texts, but e.g. Fludernik 1996 has analyzed both old and new texts to form her theory of "natural narrative": see esp. 85-91 (the *exemplum* in renaissance literature) and 115-120 (the pacing of the "episodes" of a mediaeval romance).

[77] "The narrator is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative texts." (Bal 1985: 120).

The idea of an *implied author* was put forth by Wayne C. Booth in the 1960s.[78] It is not identical with any narratorial voice or the author. It looms behind them, governing the total impact and reception of the work. In Schmid (2010) this entity has been renamed "the abstract author".[79] Nelles has also an overall organizing concept which he calls "*the general narrator*". S/he (or it, as Nelles says) is the one who narrates the whole narrative from the beginning to the end (1997: 59-72). It corresponds in theory to the extradiegetic narrator of Genette, but the distribution of features between these is not clear. This "general narrator" may sound an abstraction, like "the implied reader" of Booth, but in fact it is quite the opposite, rising from the idea that every text must have a narrator, and it appears to be necessary to separate a "higher" voice from other narrative voices. Especially in framed narratives there should be some overarching entity between the outermost communicative level — consisting of "the concrete author", who is outside the text (Joseph Conrad) and the implied author, who has no voice — and "the primary narrator" whose voice is heard only on primary level (Marlow in the frame narrative of *Heart of Darkness*).[80]

Let us now look closer at the model of Schmid (2010). Within it he posits a primary narrator who is the fictive narrator on the primary level. A character-narrator, i.e. a character on the primary level who tells a story on a secondary level, is in his model *a secondary narrator* who is already inside an embedding: his narrative takes place in "the quoted world" on the tertiary narrative level (see the diagram 1a p. 27). This looks rather complicated and even misleading, especially in cases of multiple embeddings and narrators and complex outer frames that e.g. the *Mahābhārata* contains. Pier (2014: 14) criticizes Schmid's model for the same reason. It would be simpler to have a primary narrator on a primary level, secondary on a secondary etc.

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[78] Booth 1961, 1983. The implied author is an abstract entity behind the text. It is generated unconsciously by the real author's moral and aesthetic values and their view of the world and affects the interpretation of the text (what to think about the characters and their action, etc.). Its machinations may be and often are at least partially hidden from the concrete author.

[79] The abstract author serves the same function as the implied author of Booth, but the latter emphasizes the reception of the work ("the picture of the author formed in the reader's mind"), not the diverse techniques with which a narrator conveys meanings (which is what "abstract author" implies). Basically this is a matter of perspective (see Schmid 2010: 45).

[80] According to Margolin (2014): "Finally, and most crucially, one should be able to identify a single, highest-level originator of all originators, so to speak: one general, primary or global textual narrating voice, such that (a) the text as a whole can be seen as a macro speech act or utterance emanating from that voice, and (b) all textually occurring utterances originating with other speakers are embedded within this macro speech act, that is, are merely quoted or mentioned in it."

Because of this I have in this study combined the models of Schmid, Booth and Nelles. There is "the general narrator" who "talks all the time", through all levels of the work, verbalizing the scheme of the implied author.[81] On the primary level there is a fictive narrator, who possesses the attributes of a narrator (see below). If he tells a story that takes place on another level of narration, s/he becomes a primary narrator. Also a character on the primary level becomes a primary narrator if s/he tells a story that takes place on another level (thus there may be two or more primary narrators). The narratives in both cases are on secondary level, which may contain secondary narrators, who tell stories that take place on a third level, a so on. See Diagram 1b on p. 28.[82]

These distinctions tell little about the functions of the narrator. This question is part of their individuation, where also the narratee comes into the picture. Cognitive narratology emphasizes the idea that the narrator and the narratee are constructions of the mind of the receptor, and this is reflected in the self-conscious and manipulative narrators and narratees of the two Indian epics. Narrators may be covert of overt[83], i.e. less or more conspicuous. They may have personal traits, give their opinions, show sympathy for their characters or address the audience outside the text (with "Dear reader", or similar narratorial metalepses). Many early narratives, not only those of India, can have fairly invisible narrators who do not comment their text or show their feelings but use a blunt, unemotional and lapidary narrative style.[84] In spite of this, the choice of what is told and the reason for telling it in this particular occasion is still guiding the text, and this clarifies the position of the narrator.[85]

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[81] Another way to distinguish between these actors and abstractions would be to say that the fictive narrator = the general narrator: this is what Schmid does. But Schmid keeps the fictive narrator on the primary level and calls character-narrators (such as Marlow in *Heart of Darkness)* secondary narrators on the secondary level, whereas I think it is better to make these separate.

[82] The introduction of a modified model specifically for this study may seem preposterious, but I found both Schmidt's and Genette's classification of narrators on different levels inadequate, for different reasons. I would have been happy to use a better model of some other authority, but other models have not gained popularity. The reasons to modify Schmid's scheme have been given above. In addition to the extra-intra-meta-sequence for the narrator, Genette's overall theory of framing is partly unclear: he has said that "a narrative event is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the narrative act" — which would place embeddings also on a higher level than the frame — but he has also sketched an inclusionary model in which the second-level narrative is inside the first-level narrative ("stick men and balloons"). See Pier 2014: 4, 15-18. Pier uses Genette's terminology, but criticizes it.

[83] This distinction was made by Chatman (1978: 196-262). Schmid (2010: 66-78) uses the terms implicit /explicit. 66-67 lists the parameters of narrator: in this study they are not all needed.

[84] E.g. the old Icelandic and old Irish narratives are of this type.

[85] In Western literary criticism the authorial intervention has been debated since the late 19th century, when the Jamesian ideal of hiding the author ("show, not tell") began to break ground, and it is still widely supported by the manuals of good writing. It has also influenced literary theories ("the death of the author" etc.).

The main aspects of the narrator are the scope of the knowledge of what they tell, their reliability, their articulateness, their relation to the narrative act (the degree of status, authority and formality), the attitude to the narrated (distance and tone) [86] and their projected role (an eye-witness, a chronicler, a storyteller etc.).[87] The concept of *focalization* ("Who sees?"), developed by Genette, combines some of these aspects by defining different points-of-view that the narrator may have. There may be "zero-focalization", if the narrator poses as an "all-knowing" author; internal focalization, if the inner life of the narrator is revealed; and external focalization, if only the actions of the characters are described.[88] The zero-focalizing omniscient narrator has for a long time been an unwelcome guest in Western literature, and many theorists have commented upon them unfavourably, frowning upon their likeness to God and non-natural pretence of "mind-reading".[89] There have been nevertheless some voices that defend the worth of the omniscient narrator as "a rhetorical performance of narrative authority"[90]. In the material of this study there is a full continuum of focalizers from "all-knowing" to "external", and often the omnicience of the narrator is indeed conditioned by his authority.[91]

The *narratee*[92], the fictive audience of the text, can be present in the various levels of narrative in the same way as the narrator. The narratees of primary and secondary levels are important in Indian frame stories. In the *Mahābhārata* the narratees are most active in the two outer frames, where the repetitive and recursive movement of the narrative is regulated principally by the narratees, not by the narrators. In earlier texts the narratee does not participate the narrative in the frame, although s/he can be identified or implied in text (e.g. various gods in the Vedic hymns, the priest performing a ritual in the *Brāhmaṇas*). Here my main authorities have been Genette and Schmid.[93]

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[86] These are not often easy to measure in older literature. E.g. in the *Mahābhārata* the "empathy" of the narrator towards his characters could be a stylistic and dramatic choice, not something that reveals the psyche of the narrator, as all narrators are equally sympathetic.
[87] Margolin 2014.
[88] See Fludernik 2009: 102-104; Schmid 2010: 89-117.
[89] Culler (1980 (1978): 212-219) defines "omniscience" as an impossible state, into which different narrators set limitations according to their needs. Fludernik (2009:112) sees the development of the omniscient narrator "as the refining of an ideal narrative technique whose inherently un-natural quality fails to be consciously noted by readers".
[90] Dawson 2013: 19. Dawson's work provides a useful critical assessment of theoretical views on the omniscient narrator and an analysis of its frequent use in contemporary novels.
[91] See chapters 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.
[92] This term was first intruduced by Gerald Prince in 1971, but the ideas behind were first discussed by Mikhail Bakhtin in the 1920s.
[93] Genette 1980, 1988; Schmid 2010.

The narrator and the narratee are both a part of the question of narrative mediation, first discussed by Franz Stanzel[94], who concentrates on the position of the narrator in the *narrative situation*.[95] Stanzel's theories have been further developed by Schmid[96] and Fludernik[97]. The latter has also discussed the *oral narration*. According to Fludernik, the term refers to four types of storytelling: spontaneous conversational narrative, institutional oral narrative in an oral culture, oral bardic poetry and simulations of orality in written texts.[98] Especially the last of these is something that must be taken into account when one discusses the narrative situation in Indian frame stories.[99] The concept of "storyworld", most often used in cognitive narratology, belongs both to the realm of levels and narrative time: it refers to the narrated world (with its special qualities) which there may be more than one in a narrative. The storyworld of old Indian narratives is often mythical or semi-mythical.

Central for this study is the concept of *narrativity*, which is connected to the question of *text types*. These are important in this study in the discussion about the Ṛgvedic material and the "conversational frame" in chapters 2.6. and 3.6., and I will return to *the definition of narrative* in chapter 2.1. In practice narrativity has been measured by making a list of qualities which make a text a narrative, These form a continuum, meaning that texts may show more or less these qualities and respectively, more or less narrativity.[100]

What are these qualities? The structuralist Greimas has proposed[101] a largely intuitive quality of immanence, present in the "deep structure" of the narrative. It is an organizing principle which disrupts the every-day discourse and replaces it with a text that follows "the canonical rules of the narrativity". The quality of emplotment is also fairly general: it means a way, even a necessity[102] to arrange what we see to form a story

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[94] The theories of Franz Stanzel, first put forward in 1955, are best represented in Stanzel 1979.
[95] A narrative situation is the instance in which a narrative is told.
[96] Schmid 2010: 36-51.
[97] Fludernik 1996: 53-85, 312-341.
[98] Fludernik 1996: 77-81; 2013: 40-52.
[99] The composers of the *Mahābhārata*, which obviously has originated in oral performances, retained and very probably added oral formulas when they created the present written form. They also emphasized the oral narrative situation in its outer frames in order the give an authentic touch to the whole. See chapter 3.4.
[100] Prince (2008) divides narrativity to *narrativehood*, which refers to the intention of the author to produce a narrative, and *narrativeness*, which refers to the qualities of the narrative itself.
[101] Greimas 1978.
[102] This view is taken by the historian Hayden White (1987) who is of the opinion that the discipline of history is regulated by emplotment to produce "the truth". So there is no real difference between factual and fictional representation of the world.

or a history. A narrative must have "*a logic*" that binds it together (and sets it apart from other ways of expression). Sequentality, the presence of a meaningful sequence of events[103], has been seen as a strong marker of a narrative. Eventfulness means that a narrative must contain non-trivial and fully completed events. According to Schmid "non-trivial" depends on five features: relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility, and non-iterativity.[104] Some of these are problematic when discussing old Indian narratives. They can be iterative because they have been recited orally and repetition is needed to help the audience to keep track of what is happening. In the *Mahābhārata* the predestined events and the summaries in the beginning take a heavy toll on the quality of unpredictability. The idea is that everybody knows the main plot beforehand. This is not a fault in old Indian context, because it gives an opportunity to amplify the text with details, sub-plots, embeddings and other digressions.[105]

There are also the qualities of competence and experience, located in the teller of the tale: the narrative is marked by the teller taking a role as a teller.[106] Finally, there is tellability (the subject having the potential to be worked into a story), and fictionality (the deviance of the narrative from the every-day discourse), which are both, however, somewhat shadowy and debated.[107] The list as a whole relies heavily on intuition and experience of the group of texts that have formerly been called narratives, and because of this there are plenty of narratives that do not fit all these criteria.

Theorists have also tried to choose the elements that would constitute a minimal narrative. Some would require three events, of which the second and third have a causal relation. Others are content if a change of state is indicated (e.g. "He was fired." "She became rich."). Shortest narratives can thus contain only one sentence and less than five words.[108] This is an important point when searching for narratives from the *Ṛgveda* (see the chapter 2.1.1.)

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[103] The oldest sequence is the one of Aristotle: "the beginning, the middle, the end". According to Sternberg (1978) the "master forces" of the narrative are curiosity, suspense and surprise. This is in line with the plot schemes of the Indian theorists of drama which emphasize the suspense and surprise, and also with the modern handbooks of writing fiction. Ryan (2007: 34) has separated two elements of the sequentiality: the "what" (the subject of the narrative) and "how" (how it is emplotted), where the "what" can show a high degree of narrativity but the "how" may be so digressive that the general degree of narrativity sinks. This applies to many old Indian narratives.

[104] Schmid (2010: 9-12)

[105] For repetition and the use of well-known material in the *Mahābhārata*, see the chapters 3.2.1., 3.3.1. and 3.4.

[106] These features are discussed mostly by the theorists of oral narration and the rhetoric of narrative.

[107] The latter is contested by Hayden White and others who argue that we cannot distinguish between fiction and "the truth" as we see it.

[108] See Nelles 1997: 102-108.

The list of qualities above is not definite and many of the features are too indefinite or too debatable to be of use in an analysis. Fludernik emphasizes the consciousness that is mediated: a plot is not needed but there must be a human experiencer at some narrative level.[109] Schmid discusses all the qualities and has some practical points to give. In a narrow definition of a narrative (that separates it from non-narratives) a mediating authority (narrator) is required for a text to be a narrative. This excludes dramas and films. A broader definition includes dramas and films as "mimetic" narratives, whereas the narrator-texts are "mediated" narratives.[110] Schmid binds the fictionality of the text to its reception, which in its turn depends on the historical and social context of the audience and the dominant conceptions of what is "real" in this context.[111] This sounds good, but it presents problems in early Indian literature. Many times we have not much more than the texts to build on.[112]

Traditionally it has been maintained that narrative texts are different from descriptive and explanatory (argumentative) texts because these have different relations to time. A narrative requires an event: something is happening while time is passing. A description represents a state that exists in a single moment in time. In practice the difference between these text types can be minimal. Narratives contain descriptions and explanations, descriptions use narratives to describe things that are changing and explanations explain with narratives. When discussing the part that descriptions have in narratives, Bal says that descriptions are a special problem of the realistic tradition.[113] Indeed, it has to remembered when assessing the requirements of narrativity listed above, that literary texts that were composed before the 19th century were not guided by the demand of objectivity, predominance of the plot and the advise "show, don't tell."

According to Schmid, the type of the text depends on which of these dominates the overall structure.[114] Herman is of the opinion that the notion of text type is gradated,

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[109] Fludernik 1996: 20-30.
[110] Schmid 2010: 6-7. The narrow definition is in my opinion seriously flawed, because our aesthetic response to dramas and films is intuitively the same as to novels. So we should either call them "mimetic narratives" or posit for them "an overall narrator", a general consciousness in the fashion of the implied author, that consists of a mixture of the playwright, director, stage manager, editor etc. See chapter 2.1.1.
[111] Schmid 2010: 25.
[112] It is a tendency of archaic texts to mediate the narrative with a uniform authoritative voice that is unemotional and bluntly partial in its views (i.e. it reflects without questions the values of the society within which it is composed). This creates an illusion that there is no narrator. But every narrative has a narrator.
[113] Bal 1991: 115-117.
[114] Schmid 2010: 5-6.

i.e. "more or less", not binary (all or nothing).[115] Nelles, who accepts a very wide definition for a narrative, maintains that descriptions and explanations can be read as narratives, if the apparatus of narratology is used.[116] The Vedic literature certainly requires a wider perspective. The mixture of poetry and ritual in the *Ṛgveda* and narrative and exegesis in the *Brāhmaṇas* form a different type of text that is usually analysed by theorists. Lately the dialogic quality of many of these texts has been a subject of interest in indological studies, and this has offered new possibilities to read the texts.[117] This is discussed in the chapters 2.6. and 3.5.

Narratologists do not talk about *intertextuality* as often as before, but in old Indian literature it is much in evidence.[118] Most useful is the idea of *subtexts*, the (earlier) texts that can be found to have gone into the making of the new text. Again Gérard Genette has formed the basic theory in his work on this subject.[119] Mieke Bal has discussed the overlapping of subtexts with the concept of embedding.[120] In Vedic literature the presence of subtexts is evident but hard to analyse, because most of them have not survived. There is also another dimension of referentiality: *intratextuality*, the references and relations of an individual text to its own parts. The *Mahābhārata*, its appendix, the *Harivaṃśa*, and some of the *Purāṇas* show each separately and also together as "a macro-work" a high degree of intratextuality.[121]

The reason why intertextual studies are nowadays viewed with suspicion is that the older genetic and diachronic studies tended to add evaluation to their analysis. The critique is just, because evaluation is what literary critics do: scholars must be content with analysis and interpretation. Even so, evaluation may be hidden in seemingly objective concepts and ideas. For example, when assessing the degree of narrativity of a text one measures at same time its "success" as a narrative. A survival and persistence of

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[115] Herman 2009: 101. Herman 2005 discusses the usefulness of quantitative methods in defining the characteristics of different text types. The article shows that much depends on the preliminary categorization, the choice of features that are measured and the nature and width of the material. The danger of statistical analyses of such elusive qualities as narrativity is that it leads to circular definitions: only that which is sought is found.

[116] Nelles 1997: 119. He proves his point by analyzing the pages of his own study successfully with tools of narratology.

[117] Patton 1996; Black and Patton 2015.

[118] Here I mean intertextuality in the narrow sense of the term, i.e. the presence of other texts within a text which can be proved by analysis.

[119] Genette 1997 (1982).

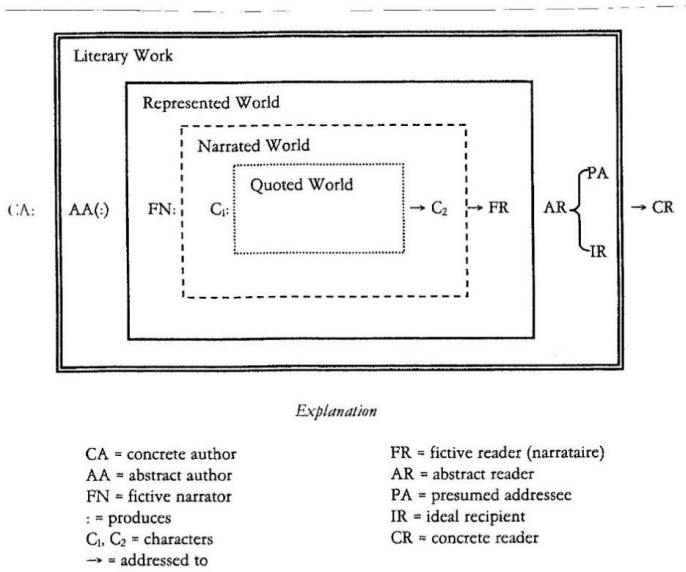
[120] Bal 1981. A good and concise introduction to intertextuality is Miller 1985.

[121] Obermaier in his study (2004) of Antons von Pforr's *Buch der Beispiele der alten Weisen* (c. 1470), a German descendant of the *Pañcatantra*, discusses frames taking into account both intratextuality and intertextuality (11-35; 210-252).

some narratives seem to prove that they work better and attract their audience more than other narratives that are forgotten and lost. A hundred-percent objectivity is an illusion.

Finally I will give two diagrams of the levels of narration and communication in the narrative work. First (1a) is taken from Schmid 2010 (36).

Diagram 1a. "The model of communicative levels" by Schmid.

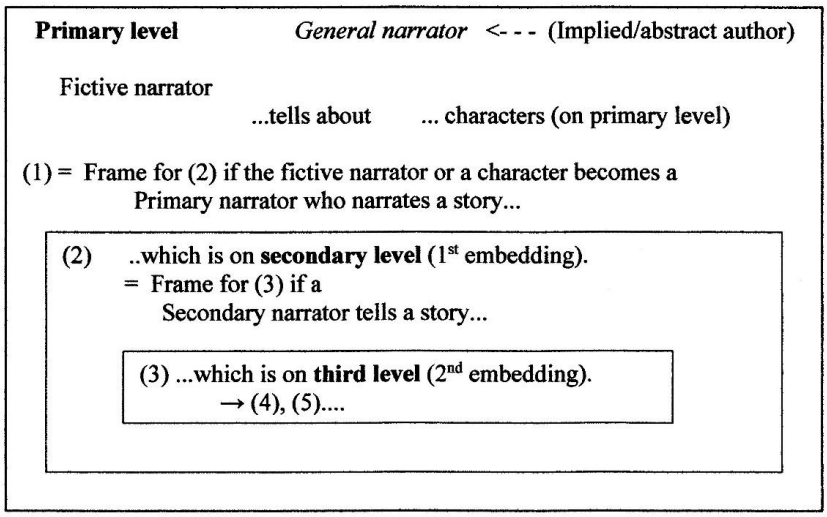


In the diagram above "the represented world", created by the abstract author, includes the fictive narrator, the narratee s/he presupposes and the narration itself. According to Schmid, a narrative work does not just narrate but represents an act of narration (Schmid 2010: 33). The fictive (primary) narrator is the mediator of "the narrated world" and selects what will be told. If the narrator or one of other characters presents an independent narrative, it belongs to "a quoted world". The last relation is that of a frame story (in the primary level of "the narrated world") and an embedded story (in the secondary level of the "the quoted world").

I have sketched a simpler model (1b) which contains only the narrative levels. (The communicative levels of Schmid have been retained, but modified in the case of the fictive/primary narrator.) The first level has the implied/abstract author as "the guiding scheme of the work" (in brackets, because s/he is an abstraction within the text); the general narrator (Nelles) as the verbal representation in the text through which the abstract

author is mediated, and the fictive/primary narrator who is the one who has the narrator's qualities (diegetic, implicit, personal etc.). An embedding occurs when s/he or one of his/her characters tells a story which happens in another diegetic level: this story forms then the secondary level. If her/his story has a narrator who tells a story, s/he is a secondary narrator with a third-level narrative.

Diagram 1b. Narrators and narrative levels (by Hämeen-Anttila).



The choice to restrict my methods to those of narratology is based on the viability and practical value of these tools. They embrace and include other useful fields of study, like that of the speech theory, and suit both the analysis and the interpretation. They are transparent and clearly formulated by scholars, the difference of opinions concerning mostly classifications and new areas of appliance like film and pictures, not the core concepts and ideas.[122]

I have avoided such speculative methods as deconstruction. These take quite often the interpretation to a direction that has little to do with the cultural space, the genesis and the actual reception of the text, and whereas this might not be a problem when

[122] Here I need to mention for the first time (but not for the last) a study that has successfully adapted the methods of narratology to old Indian material: Mangels 1994. This is in many ways a remarkable and exemplary work that should have attracted much more attention and followers.

studying the "familiar" texts of modern Western literature, it is risky when applied to other, less known literary cultures. There is also the danger of over-interpretation and/or exotism when the scholar approaches the culture without thorough knowledge of its language and its historical background. Theories have their own roots, references and affilities. They are bound by both visible and invisible cords to their cultural context. Some post-modern Western theories are too sophisticated or too strong for the study of very old literature — the texts of which, moreover, may not have been subjected to any form of purely *literary* study, or even recognition before. In the analysis of complicated structures like the frames of the *Mahābhārata* they only distract.[123] Especially the most popular theories, such as those of Foucault and Bourdieu, can easily dominate the material and force out interpretations that are dubious.[124]

Another direction that has not attracted me is the "ethnological" one. It is exasperating to see classical Indian texts which are complicated, elaborate and definitely connected to the literary tradition, being relegated summarily into the storehouse of the folklore in the general literary histories or studies. Here the idea of oral transmission has been interpreted in a simplistic way, and some knowledge of modern studies on oral narration would have corrected this view.[125] It is true that many tales and motifs in the *Mahābhārata* and in the classical story collections have been taken from folk literature and many of them can even be found in the universal repertoire of the folk tradition, but these roots, or the great success and wide circulation of these works, do not mean that the end-products belong to folk literature. I will return to this in chapters 2.1.2. and 2.7.

Finally a few words about the distinction and co-dependence of analysis and interpretation. It is important to know which one practises at a time, but I have found that these two are feeding each other. The analysis is not sound without an interpretation of the relation of the dissected pieces. Usually the framing of a narrative by another text is conditioned by the meaning or "message" of the one or the other. Both analysis and interpretation are needed in recognizing the narrative levels and borders between them,

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[123] This is not a contradiction. Even though the *Mahābhārata* shows great inventiveness in its metanarrative ploys, the ideas behind these structural intricacies are quite clear and do not need to be fuddled by bringing any external philosophical preoccupations into the interpretation.

[124] The study of Taylor (2009) on the *Pañcatantra* which bases its argument on Foucault's theories about power and social hierarchies has been criticized on this point (see esp. Maas 2014).

[125] I cannot avoid the conclusion that this classification is, again, based on a cultural hierarchy which places modern Western literature and its genres and aesthetic values on top. It is enlightening to question why such works as the *Odyssey* or the *Chanson of Roland* have been treated as literature despite their roots in oral tradition and folklore. Also the modernist infatuation in Japanese and Chinese art and poetry has done also much harm to the assessment of classical Indian art and literature, which is seen to be their opposite in its profuseness and apparent incoherence.

defining and describing the various types of narrators and narratees, and finding out how and why different parts of the narrative are put together and work as they do.

Because there is much material and some of the texts are large, it is not practical to delve too deep into interpretation of individual works. Also the emphasis of the study is on structure, not literary motifs. Still, when tracing the history of the structure it is important to study the continuity, in which the reuse and modification of the building blocks of a narrative (and those motifs!) will rise to the foreground. The methodological tools listed above are well adjusted for both analysis and interpretation. I hope that they keep me on the safe side, as they are above all practical and down-to-earth and do not give plenty of room to wild hypotheses. I will also try to give enough evidence to support my interpretations.

My training is not only that of a literary scholar, but also that of a Sanskrit philologist, and this naturally guides me when I approach the texts. Trends in theories and methodologies may change, but a solid knowledge of the language and culture is still a good basis for the study of the literature that they produce.

1.4. Previous research on the subject

The frame structure has been noted both in the Indian literature and in the Western literature from early on, but it took time for anybody to give it proper scholarly attention as a structural device and place it firmly into the landscape of literary history and theory.

Established and popular classics such as the *Decameron* (1353) of Giovanni Boccaccio and *The Canterbury Tales* (1380?-1400) of Geoffrey Chaucer, which are frame narratives, attained certainly critical interest as individual works, and literary historians of the late 18th and early 19th century were also aware that these texts were part of a tradition that had begun in the 12th century. The works of Boccaccio and Chaucer were written to entertain, but many of the early works of this type had at least superficially a moral and/or theological purpose.

The folktales and legends gathered in the collections were renamed *exempla*, examples, and they were bound together with a frame which gave them a Christian and

didactic interpretation.[126] The earliest of these was *Disciplina Clericalis* by Spanish Jew Petrus Alphonsi, who lived in the 12th century. He had been born in al-Andalus, the Muslim Spain, and the 32 tales of his book, translated from Arabic, were inserted in a frame tale which was also of Arabic origin. The book became very popular, and together with the various translations of *Kalila and Dimna*[127] it brought the frame structure into European literature.[128]. These two types of collections that used framing, strings of worldly novellas and more serious "books of wisdom", were the main form of literary prose in Europe until the 17th century, after which they went out of fashion because a new literary form emerged: the novel.[129] For many reasons the earlier tradition disappeared totally from the sight of literary scholars.[130]

The eastern frame story, however, was soon to make a come-back by another route, as Antoine Galland, a French Arabist, published his translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* in twelve volumes between 1704-1717. This collection, often called also

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[126] See Daxelmüller 1981; Haug & Wachinger 1991, esp. Haug's article.

[127] *Kalila and Dimna* is the Arabic version of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*. All the European versions of the *Pañcatantra* go back to one translation in Middle Persian by a doctor called Burzōy in middle of the 7th century CE. This man visited India to get access to the story cycle, and his own story was added into the later versions of the text. His translation has not survived but two further translations, one in old Syriac and the other in Arabic have been preserved. The first was done by a Christian priest (bishop?) named Bōd c. 760 and the second by ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in the middle of the 8th century. Because the text had changed so that there were no longer "five books" (which is what the name *Pañcatantra* means), the book got a new name from the two jackals of the frame story of the first book: Kalila and Dimna (originally Karaṭaka and Damanaka). Greek, Persian, Hebrew, Spanish and other Arabic versions were made of al-Muqaffaʿ's work, and by the 17th century in Europe and Middle East there had been more than a hundred versions of the book in circulation. Hertel (1914) contains comparative analysis of the *Pañcatantra* and *Kalila and Dimna*. For the history, translations and bibliography of *Kalila and Dimna*, see de Blois 1990 and Grotzfeld, Grotzfeld and Marzolph 1993.

[128] Here it should be added that there are earlier works which used frame-like devices, mostly by letting characters tell about their past adventures. In addition to the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid* of Virgil and Greek romances of the 1st to 3rd centuries CE can be mentioned. Various texts which preachers, use the "dream" ploy can also be classed as frame stories. But the frame was not as usual as it was in India until the publication of *Disciplina Clericalis*. Of the structure and influence of the work see Menocal 1987, Ford 2015. - Other works heavily indebted to the mediaeval Arabic culture and frame story tradition were *Libro de Buen Amor* by Juan Ruiz (1343) and *El Conde Lucanor* by Don Juan Manuel (1335). 12th century manual for *Gesta Romanorum*, contained fables, tales and novellas from West and East and served as a source for Chaucer and Shakespeare. Later examples of framed story collections followed mostly the model of the *Decameron*: the 15th century *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* by Philippe de la Sale and the 16th century *Heptaméron* by Marguerite de Navarre both contain tales of adultery and deceit.

[129] The appearance of the novel is usually said to begin first with 17th century with two forerunners, Cervantes in the Spain and Grimmelshausen in Germany, and then, in earnest, in the 18th century by Le Sage (*Gil Blas*) in France and Defoe and Richardson in Britain. But if the concept of "the novel" is given a wider meaning, it has antecedents in the Hellenistic world (the Greek novel). See Scholes and Kellogg (1966, new version 2006).

[130] The biggest reason was that at the same time as the genre of the novel was established and literary studies developed from biographical essays into an academic discipline, the study of the mediaeval texts became also an area of specialists. For a long time the gap between pre-modern and modern literature was considered to be far greater than it really is. This view started to change only in the late 1950s.

the *Arabian Nights*[131], has had an enormous influence to European literature and culture since the Romantic period. It gave a prototype of both an oriental story book and an oriental tale, to say nothing about the image of the magical, mystical and erotic East it promulgated.[132] From the point of the history and theory of the frame, the success of this charming book presents some problems. Unlike the Indian collections, which had been famous in the mediaeval Europe and then forgotten, it has remained so familiar in the West that it has indeed become the very model of "the Oriental frame story" in many ways. It is sometimes compared to the *Pañcatantra* to point out how superior the Arabic version of the frame story is to the Indian version.[133] But it is a great loss for scholarly knowledge if somebody who is writing the history of the frame passes India cursorily, trusting to short summaries in secondary literature, and rushes on to dwell for a long time in the Arabic collection because, in a way, it has become a part of the Western canon.[134]

The industrious study of the Indian narratives by the specialists started, however, in the middle of the 19th century. Theodor Benfey was the first to concentrate to the versions of the *Pañcatantra* and its parallels in the West: great parts his book about it[135] are still valuable. Johannes Hertel and Franklin Edgerton updated the knowledge of this story cycle in the early 20th century, and the same period saw many editions and translations, of not only of the *Pañcatantra*, but of other frame story cycles as well. The work of Hertel and Edgerton work has been continued from the 1950s, but few scholars

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[131] A shorter form of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, the name of the first English translation of the work (1706).

[132] Gerhardt (1963) gives a thorough picture of the types of narratives contained in the text. A good introduction which tells about the background of the text and its afterlife is Irwin (1994).

[133] The comparison between these is not valid, as the *Pañcatantra* is nearly a thousand years older, represents a different sub-genre and moreover, is only one of the many models of framing that have been used India. The *Thousand and One Nights* is quite similar in style and structure to the later Indian story collections, and if one e.g. compares the story of "The Girl with Four Lovers" / "The Entrapped Suitors" in the Arabic collection and in the 14th century Indian *Śukasaptati*, most would say that the Indian version, in this case very probably the original one, is plotted better and is also much more fun.

[134] Without belittling the worth of the *Thousand and One Nights*, it would be useful to think more often the processes through which the texts of "the East" have become known in the "West". Whereas the many phases of adapting and amplifying the text in Persia and Near East and Europe can be called natural (because our modern insistence of the literary text to be one and immutable has been rare before) the "adaptation" of the *Thousand and One Nights* in Europe is not quite like this. It should be connected to the fact that the dominant European countries were at the same time busily colonizing the cultures which produced this text and moulding them in the Western imagination to suit their taste and their purposes, a bit in the manner Hollywood has been doing remakes of European films to make them more familiar and acceptable and thus leaving off precisely the features that make those films original. So for the literary scholar "the *Arabian Nights*", at least as it is popularly conceived, is no longer an Eastern text, but something far more complicated. See e.g. Marzolph 2006: 3-15.

[135] Benfey 1859. Benfey did not have access to all the material that e.g. Hertel could use, and his ideas of the Indian (and Buddhist) origin of all tales that circulated in medieval Europe are definitely overblown. His big asset was, however, that he treated his material as real literature, not as a mixed bag of folktales and philological curiosities.

have specialized in narrative literature.[136] Among the Arabists the *Kalila and Dimna* cycle has also been the object of interest (see note 112 above) and especially the study of de Blois[137] is valuable also for the Indologist. Any of these scholars, however, has not concentrated on the frame structure or the narrative situation of the cycle as literary devices. A notable exception is the study on the German version of Anton von Pforr by Sabine Obermeier[138] whose inter- and intratextual and comparative analysis contains also parts which discuss the structure and the various narrators of this mediaeval text.

After a surge of activity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries other frame story collections have attracted less attention. There are new translations, but not much scholarly interest nor fresh theoretical viewpoints: articles deal with separate works and their history with traditional philological apparatus. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* ("The Ocean of the Rivers of Stories") of Somadeva, the most famous of the later story cycles, is so large and heterogenous that it is difficult to approach, and it has not the elevated status of the *Mahābhārata* to tempt students.[139] In his article about the lost *Bṛhatkathā* Donald Nelson, while defending with reason the study of old Indian texts as literary products, instead of using them as material for historical and ethnological study, finds still the many digressions of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* insufferable and says that the style reminds him the *Purāṇas*.[140]

From early on the scholars of Vedic literature have paid attention to the narrative elements contained in the collections of the hymns (*Saṃhitās*) and in the commentaries (*Brāhmaṇas*).[141] Still valuable are the studies on the Vedic narratives by Hermann Oldenberg and Emil Sieg[142] and Willem Caland's notes to his editions and translations.[143] As the narratives were mostly fragmentary, the aim of many studies was to reconstruct "lost" tales or epics among the material primarily composed for the purposes of religious worship, and to find connections to later stories. Individual tales, above all the Śunaḥśepa

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[136] Studies of the *Pañcatantra* cycle have been written by Ruben 1959; Sternbach 1948, 1960, 1971, 1974; Geib 1969; Falk 1978; Maten 1981; Van Damme 1991; and Taylor 2009.
[137] de Blois 1990.
[138] Obermeier 2004.
[139] Winternitz (1963: 353-365) praises the style and the ingenuity of individual stories but finds no organization or interdependence between the various frames and the embedded tales.
[140] Nelson 1978: 669-672. *Purāṇas* ("Old Matters", 3rd - 10th centuries CE) are texts that praise various gods and tell about cosmology and mythology connected with them. It has long been a habit of scholars to use them as an example of a tedious and repetitive style. Nowadays they have found more tolerant readers.
[141] For the history of Vedic studies see Gonda 1975: 55-63.
[142] Oldenberg 1885; 1917; Sieg 1902. Oldenberg's *ākhyāna* theory is discussed in the chapter 2.2.2.
[143] Especially Caland 1919 (excerpts from the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*) and 1931 (the translation of the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*).

story, were commented on[144], and the first traces of narratives diligently mapped, but it seems that before Witzel nobody had sought the origin of the frame story structure. Witzel's article about the Cyavana story in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*[145] was noted soon by Christopher Minkowski, who modified Witzel's hypothesis with his own articles about the *Mahābhārata*.[146] However, there has not been a serious effort by anyone else to confirm these hypotheses or suggest another theory about the origin on the frame. Naturally these articles are very relevant for my study and I will return to them in 2.3.2., 2.4. and 3.4.

The *Mahābhārata* has been a subject of continuous research from the 19th century. From the beginning the Epic was seen by Western scholars as an end-product of a long process of interpolating and editing. The heroic plot of the dynastic strife was supposed to be the original kernel, preserved first as an oral epic by the *kṣatriyas* (the warrior caste) and then raided[147] by the priestly *brahman (brāhmaṇa*) class which wrote it down with a multitude of changes and additions that were to their taste. Therefore the "intercalations", except the *Bhagavadgītā*, which was a piece of impressive poetic force, were treated as extraneous material and passed by, in favour of the "heroic core". This theoretical basis is prominent e.g. in the work of Oldenberg[148], Hopkins[149] and Winternitz[150] and it is still visible in the introduction and notes written by van Buitenen for his English translation.[151]

Different views, such that insisted that the text should be read and studied as a whole, were expressed as early as in the 1890s by Joseph Dahlmann, who emphasized the element of *dharma*[152] that brought unity to the Epic[153], and from the 1970s on more forcefully by Madeline Biardeau, Alf Hiltebeitel and others.[154] They insisted that a

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[144] The bibliography of studies on the narrative of Śunaḥśepa is given in 2.3.3.
[145] Witzel 1987.
[146] Minkowski 1989; 1991.
[147] A more modern verb would be "to appropriate".
[148] Oldenberg 1922.
[149] Hopkins 1901.
[150] Winternitz 1981 (1907): talks about "the monstrous mass" which contains "a pure nucleus which is the story of the battle between the Kauravas and Pandavas, which constituted the motif of the actual epic." (p. 307)
[151] van Buitenen 1973-1978.
[152] *Dharma*, very important in reading and analysing the two epics of India, is a concept that is difficult to translate in one word. It is "moral law" and "duty" put into one. Every person has *dharma* that is bound to his/her class and position, but there are general dharmic principles such as truthfulness, non-violence, piety, feeling of responsibility and obeisance to religious and social authorities. The plots of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* revolve round the *dharma* of the king.
[153] Dahlmann 1899.
[154] Hiltebeitel 1976, 1991, 2001a; Biardeau 2002. Feller (2004) which analyses the Vedic myths present in the narratives of the MBh, represents also the "synthetic" view.

literary work should be analyzed and interpreted as a whole and taking into account its reception in the native context. This approach opened fresh areas of investigation. It meant, among other things, that not only the embedded tales, which had been appreciated on their own, but also the two outer frames that had before been dismissed as fanciful and pointless became interesting.[155] The studies about the two frames, their narrators and the narratees and other frames in the Epic by Hiltebeitel, Mangels, Oberlies, Fitzgerald, Minkowski and Adluri[156] have been central for writing of the chapter 3 of the present work, as have been Sullivan's book about Vyāsa[157] and the introduction by Earl[158] that was mentioned earlier. Especially the dissertation of Mangels, which concentrates on the technique of narrating in the *Mahābhārata*, is ground-breaking and should be better known. An important work that combines the ideas of different scholars working on Epics, Vedic literature and story literature, is the collection of essays edited by Black and Patton.[159] It deals with the dialogues that drive (and also frame) many of the narratives or expositions in Indian texts.

The frames of the *Rāmāyaṇa* have been studied as a part of the question of the evolution of the epic. The books 1 and 7 which constitute the outer frame are generally believed to be the latest part of the text; in addition, the sequence that is supposed to close the frame in the Book 7 is incomplete and baffling.[160] These features have led to a dismissal of the structure as "a proper frame".[161] On the other hand, nobody denies that there are frames in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Purāṇas*, as they are so clearly replicas of the frames of the *Mahābhārata*. These have been expertly studied by Söhnen-Thieme.[162]

Finally I pick up the thread leading from the *Thousand and One Nights* to the recent histories and theories of the frame in the field of the literary studies.

The rise of the structuralist theories and especially the branching out of a special discipline of narratology, with its own offshoots, has lead to a new understanding of such concepts as narrator and narrative levels. These trends have been touched in the chapter

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[155] There is an earlier study of Mehta (1973), which treats the problematic "double beginning" caused by the two frames. See chapter 3.2.1.
[156] Hiltebeitel 2001a, 2011; Mangels 1994; Oberlies 2008; Fitzgerald 1991; Minkowski 1991; Adluri 2011.
[157] Sullivan 1999 (1990).
[158] Earl 2011.
[159] Black and Patton 2015, esp. the articles in the Part I by Patton, Hiltebeitel, Esposito and Appleton and in the Part III by Black.
[160] See the chapter 3.5.1.
[161] See e.g. Minkowski 1989: 412; Söhnen-Thieme 1998a: 108-109 (which describes the book 1:1-4 as a preface, not a real frame: see, however, the chapter 3.5.1.).
[162] Söhnen-Thieme 2005 and 2016.

1.3. above. This in its turn has brought the non-Western use of frames to the horizon of the literary scholars. In many histories the *Pañcatantra* is mentioned very near the beginning. Some studies, e.g. Picard (1987) and Haug (1991) give it more space and consideration, comparing it to frame narratives from other cultures and getting quite interesting results. But mostly it is described briefly and superficially and completely forgotten in the rest of the study. Studies which concentrate on frame narrative take their material almost always from Western texts, and understandably modern or romantic literary works are the favourites.[163]

Other Indian frame narratives than the *Pañcatantra*, such as the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, the *Śukasaptati*, or the two great epics which both use frames and embeddings, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, are very rarely even mentioned in the western literary studies. The article of Witzel on the Cyavana story is referred to, but without explaining its content. In his excellent study of the frame structure William Nelles[164] puts all information about the *Pañcatantra* in a footnote and refers to no other Indian narratives.

Perhaps this is wise. Without knowlegde of the cultural context and the language one goes easily astray. A warning example is the study of the *Canterbury tales* by Katharine Gittes.[165] It is often cited by literary scholars as an authority on the frame story, and also an authority on the *Pañcatantra*. The second supposition is misguided, as Gittes knows nothing about Indian literature, as it is not her field. Her main informant for it, B. E. Perry, is also a non-specialist, being a Classicist and out of his area of expertise when he talks about Persian literature and even more when he talks about Indian literature[166].

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[163] Wolf 2006b mentions several studies of framing, of which Scryock (1993) and Stratmann (2000) discuss modern works. Davidoff 1988 investigates frames in medieval English poetry, which is differs considerably from early Indian texts. Reading these studies one becomes acutely aware of the fact that "concrete literary texts often override theoretical attempts at neat definitive distinctions" (Wolf 2006: 183), in this case with the realization of these attempts being surprisingly insensitive to differences in cultural and literary traditions.

[164] Nelles 1997.

[165] Gittes 1991.

[166] B. E. Perry (1892-1968), a Classicist specialized in Aesopian Fables and the Alexandrian novels, is not to be mixed with John R. Perry who is an Iranist. B. E. Perry's long article which Gittes bases her argument on the *Pañcatantra* and Indian literature in general, was published in *Fabula* in 1959 (1-94). In it Perry traces the roots of the the *Book of Sindbad* (*Sindbad-Nāmah*), accusing the Indologists of "making it their own specialty" even though it is of Persian origin. He relies on secondary sources in every stage of his study, but his findings are not all wrong, as the origin of many stories is not clear. What mars the article are his preconceived notions: first, the belief on intellectual and cultural superiority of the Classical Greece and Rome to any other culture near and far up to the 17th century, secondly the fixed idea of the wide barrier between oral (primitive) and literary (cultured), and most of all, his nearly racist attitudes towards Indian literature and his animosity towards Indologists. The story cycles of India are "grotesque" and exaggerated in every way, in contrast with the simple naturalism of the classical fictions (or Persian ones, because they must have copied the classical model). According to Perry, the *Pañcatantra* "abuses"

Perry's theory about the origin of the frame story is not "most widely accepted", as Gittes says[167]: far from it. In addition to this, Gittes has invented a theory about "the openness" of the Arabian frame story and "the closedness" of the Indian frame story, connected with the geographical sphere and the mentality of these cultures. In the words of Nelles, this "courts a naive Orientalism".[168] The subject of the book by Gittes is the history of frame stories and it would be natural to list it among the important studies for this dissertation, but her lack of discernment in the fairly big questions mentioned above makes me read the whole work with a wary eye.

But I must not end this survey on a bitter note. There have recently been some literary scholars that are ready to approach old Indian literature without prejudices. One of them, Patrick Colm Hogan, has also acquainted himself with Indian handbooks of literary theory, such as the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, its successor, The *Daśarūpa* of Dhanamjaya, and the work of Abhinavagupta, the 10th century authority on aesthetics and reception theory.[169] I believe that the ideas of these treatises[170] have inspired his own theory of "affective narratology", which emphasizes emotions as the driving force behing plots and structures in literary works. The material he uses is wide-ranging and embraces literary classics from Western countries, Asia, Middle East and South America. To illustrate one of the plot types he has formulated (the romantic plot) he analyses Kālidāsa's play *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* ("The Recognition of Śakuntalā").[171] He is not interested in the frame or narrative levels, however, and his theory, which concentrates of different types of plots and units and sequences which build narratives (and emotions which drive these), is therefore not relevant for my study.

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the frame story with its too many levels, whereas the *Sindbad-Namah*, like "the western books", are arranged paratactically (16-17). The simple, gracious form of the latter must be the original form of the frame story. His (and Gittes') conlusion: the Indians took the frame story from the Persians and corrupted it.

[167] Gittes 1991: 9.

[168] Nelles 1997: 183-184, n. 9. I would not give this much space to B. E. Perry's article, but the fact is that I have seen Gittes' work (and her opinions of the *Pañcatantra* which echo Perry's opinions described above) quoted in various studies about the frame story. I would like to point out that, without even considering the bias of the sources, this is quoting a non-specialist source who bases her argument on a non-specialist secondary source — i.e. it is very unprofessional.

[169] Hogan 2003: 39-83; 2011: 78-79. Hogan also discusses the main plots of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

[170] The basic Sanskrit works of dramaturgy, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Daśarūpa*, as well as Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabhāratī*, contain the theory of *rasas*, eight primary aesthetic moods, which arise from eight primary feelings (*bhāva*). There are also minor and transitional moods and feelings. The *rasas* are connected to the plot, which has five phases and five junctures and various other components. The works mentioned above describe and analyse the plot and the *rasas* in great detail.

[171] Hogan 2011: 165-184. Kālidāsa (5th century CE) is the most famous poet and playwright of the Classical India.

As long as there are no accessible general studies on the Indian frame story by Indologists, it is not easy neither for scholars of comparative literature or narratology to say anything substantial about it. I quote Nelles again: "Some idea of just how ambitious — and fascinating — a full-blown history of embedded narrative would have to be may be inferred from Stuart H. Blackburn's detailed analysis of just one of the embedded tales from the *Pañcatantra*[172] [...]. Barring some astoundingly scholarly coup, the task seems possible only if undertaken a piece at a time in a series of studies circumscribed by period and nation [...] or perhaps by clusters of authors:"[173]

This study is not "a full-blown history", but I think it is ambitious enough to try to follow the trail of the frame story in India. *Oṃ śrīgaṇapataye namaḥ! Avighnam astu!*

[172] Blackburn 1986.
[173] Nelles 1997: 163, n. 1.

2. BEGINNINGS: THE VEDIC MODEL

2.1. First questions

To search for the origin of something one has to find the earliest recorded examples of it and, above all, to make sure that they qualify as real examples. Therefore I begin with three questions that form the basis for the quest for the first Indian frame stories.

The first question — or more accurately, a cluster of questions — is theoretical and methodological. How to define a frame? What kind of structures can be called a frame or an embedding? Is it necessary for both of them to be narratives? The term "narrative" must also be defined again, to make sure that one can do justice to the earlier, preliminary forms of narratives and frames.

The second and third questions are connected to the concepts of oral tradition, sacred texts and the continuity of literature. Here and there one meets the idea that the Vedic corpus, even though it is called "literature", is not a literary composition but something else, something unique. Does this uniqueness and "non-literariness" mean that it cannot be analysed as literature and compared to literary texts that followed it? In addition, does oral transmission of texts make them automatically "non-literary"? To me it is clear that the answer to both of these questions is "no, and this is not the way to look at the subject", but something must be said to explain the contrary views.

2.1.1. The definitions for frame and embedding

There seems to be a wide consensus of the basic form of "a frame narrative". But we may ask whether this basic form is really something that can unanimously be agreed upon. I quote first the definition for a frame by Bernard Duyfhuizen in an authoritative handbook of narratology.[174] "Framed narratives occur in narrative situations when events are

[174] Duyfhuizen 2010 (2005):186. The best short introduction to the study of frames and embeddings is Pier 2014.

narrated by a character other than the primary narrator or when a character tells a tale that, although unrelated to the main story, contains a moral message for the listener of the text."

There are two problems in this definition. When mentioning the primary narrator, Duyfhuizen refers to the article on "Narrator" in the same volume, but this article does not mention "a primary narrator", only Genette's classification of extra-, intra- and metadiegetic narrators.[175] So, is "the primary narrator" of Duifhuizen's definition a general/fictive/unpersonified narrator, or a diegetic narrator who is a character in her/his own narrative? The first of these would certainly be ruled out as a narrator of an embedded story as Duifhuizen says, but the second, in my opinion, would be quite capable of telling a narrative to another character within his own (general) narrative, which would make it a narrative on a secondary level.[176]

The other hazy expression in the definition is "the moral message". There may be a message in the embedding and it may be moral, but not necessarily. An embedding can serve many purposes. In his scheme of the levels Genette identifies three functions ofr the embedding: (1) explanatory (causal), (2) thematic (analogy or contrast) and (3) independent (distraction).[177] Nelles repeats these in his division to dramatic, thematic and mechanical embeddings.[178] To illustrate the last function one could mention Somadeva's massive story cycle *Kathāsaritsāgara* (12th century CE), in which there are many subtales that seem to be inserted just because they are good stories.

Duifhuizen defines an embedding like this: "Embedding refers to the narrative situation in which part of the main narrative or a significant plot detail is displaced temporarily to another location in the narration." This definition refers only to flashbacks and flash-forwards.[179] If the "inset narrative is not directly related to the main narrative", the structure is for Duifhuizen an *intercalation*.[180] The term "intercalation" was recommended also by Greimas and Courtés to avoid confusion with linguistic categories.[181] Why should such confusion arise? Well, an early analysis by Todorov linked embedding in narratives with subordination in grammar.[182] The sequence

[175] Phelan and Booth 2010 (2005): 390.
[176] This happens all the time in the *Mahābhārata*: see chapter 3.3.1.
[177] Genette 1980 (1972): 232-234.
[178] Nelles 2010 (2005): 135.
[179] Duifhuizen 2010 (2005): 186.
[180] Duifhuizen 2010 (2005): 187.
[181] Pier 2014: 7.
[182] Todorov 1973 (1968): 83-85.

"Sheherazade tells that Jaafar tells that the tailor tells that..." seems to comfirm Todorov's idea. However, the similarity diminishes if one does not use some version of the verb "tell" and present a narrative (or its proxy, like in Todorov's example) in the position of the subordinated clause.[183] The hierarchy of levels in narratives cannot be reduced to a grammatical system. But as narratologists are no longer preoccupied with "the grammar of narrative"[184], there is no need to be hypercautious and use "intercalation" as the general term, relegating "embedding" to describe only special cases. So in this study the term *embedding* covers all kinds of insertions that are situated in a lower narrative level.

The comparison of narrative embedding to conversational analysis is a different venture altogether. There is an interesting complexity in the heart of framing and embedding. "The story within a story" is an artificial technique, far more typical to written narrative than to oral storytelling (in similar way as hypotaxis is typical to written text and parataxis to oral conversation), but very often the former, when using embeddings, "seeks to restore the sense of orality" by introducing the embedding with formulas and narrative situations that mimick oral storytelling.[185]

Duifhuizen continues his definition: "As [in framing] each narrating act contains another narrating act, the diegetic level shifts from initial extradiegetic level to an intradiegetic level of narration, to a metadiegetic level of narration and beyond."[186] I agree with this, although I call the levels primary, secondary and tertiary (or third). To sum up, for a frame (and for an embedding) to be found there should be at least two levels. Using the terms of the diagrams in the chapter 1.3., these are: (i) *the fictive world / the primary level*, with the fictive primary narrators and their fictive audience, and (ii) *the quoted world* / *the secondary level*, with its own actors, to which the primary narrator may belong, or not.

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[183] See Pier 2014: 7.

[184] Another attempt to bind grammar and narrative is Coste 1989: 165-74. Coste proposes a division between hypotactic (subordinate) and paratactic (co-ordinated) embeddings. This is essentially the same thing as the division between vertical and horizontal embedding made by Nelles (see p. 18). The tendency to superimpose "grammar" on literature is akin to the hypothesis that I want to refute in this study (to superimpose "ritual" on literature). I believe that these are parallel systems that share some characteristics. See chapters 2.4. and 3.6.

[185] See Pier 2014: 8; and the chapters 1.3. and 3.4. of this study.

[186] Duifhuizen 2010 (2005): 187. What constitutes "a level" is also an intricate question. Ryan (1986, 1991) has discussed their ontological and illocutionary boundaries, suggesting that several types of expressions form a *continuum* between levels. Her theory is quite radical and so I do not apply it here, but it has been in my mind when I have looked at the early texts and their framing strategies.

The Epic model conforms neatly to these definitions.[187] The Vedic model is different, and for this reason I need to probe further and ask how strict the matrix of frame/embedding might be. One has to keep in mind that what we are looking for are antecedents, tendencies, sketches, primitive or partial forms, not the finished end-product. That end-product is represented by the *Mahābhārata*,[188] and it is not probable that the framing technique was invented by its composers from a scratch. To use it so deftly they had to have experience: examples serving as models, and textual habits which they applied to their material. As I believe that the model was not the ritual but other texts, the testimony has to gathered from the latter.

Let us look at other definitions for the frame story. Werner Wolf starts with the requirement that the frames should be integral parts of the whole and they must be "located on a logically higher (diegetic) level".[189] He also says that the narratives on a lower level must be narrated by one or several secondary narrators or narrated characters, and both the frame and the embedding must have "narrativity".[190] The last qualification leads to trouble. In the chapter 1.3. it was stated that narrativity is not an on-off quality which the text possesses or does not possess, but a continuum, so that texts display more or less narrativity. Most narratives contain descriptions in which the degree of narrativity is low, and the ideal grade of narrativity also changes with time and culture. On one hand, many old narratives seem slow (to us) because (we think that) they have low degree of narrativity: we tend to be biased when we meet pre-modern texts. On the other hand, modern experimental narratives often have a broken plot and contain several text types, and still remain narratives.[191]

If one looks at the material behind the definition, Wolf takes examples predominantly from the modern Western literature: only the *Arabian Nights*, *Decamerone* and the *Canterbury tales* represent "the other". But even this restricted corpus includes

[187] See the chapter 3.1.
[188] In the *Mahābhārata* the frame structure characterizes the work more than any other feature. There are two outer frames that have an emphatic narrative situation for the presentation of the embedded narrative of the main narrative, and the storyline within the frames is dotted with embedded narratives: there are 67 major subtales and at least as many smaller subnarratives arranged in different groupings. Of course this multitude can be said to be the product of a long accumulation, but the still one would expect to find some forerunners. In older Indian scientific literature it is common that only the last and most perfect specimen of a long tradition survives. Pāṇini's sophisticated grammar is an example of this. There is no epic to predate the *Mahābhārata*, but there was a rich literary and narrative tradition.
[189] Wolf 2006b: 180.
[190] Wolf 2006b: 181.
[191] The term used in the modern context is usually collage or montage, not a frame and embedding. See Fludernik 2003: 269-310.

many borderline cases. So it is understandable that at the end of his description Wolf seems to be content with a minimum: in the frame narrative there must be "at least two vertically different levels".[192]

Indeed, it seems more practical to look at the structure and the presence of these two levels (i.e. two different worlds) than measure the degree of narrativity in each text ("is 50 percent enough? 30 percent?"). One solution would be to say that at least one of the levels must be a narrative (≥ 50 % narrativity, perhaps) for the structure to be called "a frame *story*". Usually the embedding is the one that shows more narrative qualities: the frame, even if it looks like a narrative, may have little action, and it can be there only to give occasion to the telling of the embedded story.

This is the case e.g. in the prologue of the *Pañcatantra* and, to give a modern Western example, in *The Turn of the Screw* of Henry James. The two "events" of the prologue (*kathāmukha*) or the outermost frame of the *Pañcatantra* (which form also the outer frame) are (1) the despair of the king because of his dull-witted sons and (2) the appearance of the wise Viṣṇuśarman who promises to make the boys wise by reciting the five books of the *Pañcatantra* to them. Obermaier calls this "static" type of a frame a "situational frame" (Situationsrahmen), in contrast to "story frame" (Novellenrahmen) which contains a more definite story.[193] Nelles makes the same distinction.[194] Williams proposes a typology of preliminary, introductory and prologue frames.[195] His analysis, however, is not quite consistent in regard to the two levels of frame and embedding.[196]

Fludernik has some interesting things to say about "power relations" of the frame and the embedding. She sees them as complementary and proportional. She says: "With regard to length, frame and inset are [...] in inverse proportion to the relation obtaining between a story and the embedded story within it," and conludes: "If the tale is conceptualized as subsidiary to the primary story frame, a relationship of embedding occurs; if the primary story level serves as a mere introduction to the narrative proper, it will be perceived as a framing device."[197] This means that Fludernik makes a difference between framing (the embedding dominates the whole) and embedding (the frame dominates the whole). In this study I will not make this disctinction, but it is to be noted

[192] Wolf 2006b: 185.
[193] Obermeier 2004: 237 n. 25; 240-246.
[194] Nelles 2010 (2005): 134.
[195] Williams 1998: 120-125.
[196] I believe that the reason for the emphasis on the frame is his material: British novels possessed very domineering and personal narrator-figures and frame structures in the 18th and 19th centuries.
[197] Fludernik 1996: 343. Also referred to in Pier 2014: 12.

that "framing" would be the word for most Indian frame narratives from the *Mahābhārata* onwards. Before that the scales are even.

This discussion must be kept in mind throughout the study. E.g. the question of the text types surfaces in the chapters that analyse the narratives in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In them the embeddings are narratives, but the frame belongs to another text type (description, argument). Still, if one would follow Nelles, exposition, description and argument can be read as narratives.[198]

What about the narrator? An overt primary narrator would make the presence of two diegetic levels clearer.[199] This is not necessary a problem in Vedic literature. Poems (such as the Ṛgvedic hymns) and also many non-fiction texts (such as the *Brāhmaṇas*) have primary narrators with a distinctive voice.[200] Again it must be emphasized that all texts have a narrator. Poems are no exception, not even when their content is lyrical and descriptive: in that case the narrator's voice records mental events and "the plot" takes place in the consciousness.[201] Narrators of lyrical poems can be characterized in the same way as narrators of narrative poems: they may be overt/covert, diegetic or non-diegetic and so on.

A dramatic text (monologues and dialogues) can be analysed as a "mimetic narrative"[202]. Moreover, there are narratologists who are willing to see dramatic dialogue or quoted speech as something that is embedded within another text. Manfred Jahn has drawn attention to the narrative properties of stage directions, which frame the dialogue in the dramas. He also compares the levels of communication in dramatic texts with narrative embedding in novels.[203] The advocates of "natural narratology" have stated that quoted speech of the characters could be analysed as an embedded narrative.[204] These theoretical presuppositions can be applied to the Vedic monologue and dialogue (*saṃvāda*) hymns. They push the definitions of narrative and frame further than is usual,

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[198] See p. 26 (also n.116).
[199] See the Diagram 1b p. 27.
[200] The general narrator (Nelles) is perhaps more visible in texts that were formerly called "narratorless narratives", when one realizes that there is somebody who mediates the story. The primary narrators are more visible, especially if they take the position of the narrator. As explained above, Schmid thinks that the two are one.
[201] According to Hühn and Sommer (2012) "narration as a communicative act in which a chain of happenings is meaningfully structured and transmitted in a particular medium and from a particular point of view underlies not only narrative fiction proper but also poems and plays [...]." The narrator in a poem is often called a *persona*, to avoid the word "poet" which implies that one hears the voice of the concrete author.
[202] See the chapter 1.3. p. 25.
[203] Jahn 2001.
[204] See e.g. Fludernik 1993: 398–433.

but they also reveal that simplistic ideas of what is a frame narrative ("a story within a story" or "a narrator telling a story inside another story" etc.) are not applicable in many cases. What is most important is that they may not be the right ones when analysing literary material of an age in which literary forms were not yet fixed but only being formed and invented en route.

There is still one theoretical issue that must be taken up. The chapter 1.3. put forward a question about the minimum scope of a narrative: it was said that one sentence is enough if it involves a change of state (a minimal plot). Because of their structure, the Vedic hymns never tell "a full story" but give instead "a mini-narrative", a reference or an allusion, trusting without doubt to the fact that the contemporary audience knows "the full story". A hasty opinion would be that these "short-cuts" or "summaries" are not real narratives. Within the narrative theory, however, one must ask how large, coherent or informative an allusion must be to be analysed as a narrative and an embedding. If one sentence that contains a change of state is enough, the matter is clear: we can put each of the "mini-narratives" of the poems to a test. This, again, stretches the definition of narrative near to the limit, but what matters is that we are still inside it. Another restriction is that the "mini-narrative" must be on a different level, so that there is a boundary between it and the text around it. This depends on the interpretation of the Vedic poems, which is notoriously difficult.

2.1.2. The definitions for literariness and literature

Next I try to find answers to the questions about the sacredness and literariness of the Vedic corpus .[205] Let us first look at the categorization of texts made by the preservers and arbiters of the early Indian textual tradition.

[205] For narratologists and scholars of general literary studies much of the rest of the chapter may appear unnecessary. Religion, however, has been and still is a great influence in India, and the Vedic texts occupy a special position, because they have remained in ritual use. A revealing example of the differences of the attitudes is the Western and Indian reception of the Western and Indian film versions of the *Mahābhārata*. E.g. Milewska gives the reason for Indian rejection of Peter Brook's version: "Indian people, both the popular public and the intellectual circles, treat the epic as a cult work rather than as a work of art" (1999: 174). It is a pity that Milewska does not go any deeper to the existence of "two monologues" which do not raise to the level of a dialogue. It may be asked how much this cult status can be allowed to influence the research on the *Mahābhārata*. If it belongs to world literature, as I believe it does, it should be open to all kinds of analyses and readings as long as they are critical and well-informed.

The classical Indian treatises of literature mention usually four groups of texts: they are *āgama* (Vedic, Buddhist and Jain canonical texts), *itihāsa* ("it-has-been-said-it-is-so", i.e. history and tradition, above all the epic *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*), *śāstra* ("science", factual works) and *kāvya*, "belles lettres", the polished and ornate literature sponsored by the court and the wealthy merchant class and supported by the work of the literary theorists. *Kāvya* was further divided into sub-classes of *padya* ("metrical": epic and lyric poetry), *gadya* (prose) and *miśra* ("mixed", containing both prose and verse: dramas and many narratives having this form). Some theorists distinguish only three or two classes.[206] For the literary theorists *kāvya* was the only thing that counted. The Vedic texts did not interest them, because they were connected to religion and rituals, they did not recognize the aesthetics of *kāvya* and they were written in partly unintelligible archaic Vedic Sanskrit, not in the "refined" classical Sanskrit used for *kāvya*.

The class that preserved the Vedic corpus took similar steps to elevate and isolate its own texts. As the importance of rituals and their performers grew, the texts that were used became more and more sacred. The painstaking methods of preserving them intact (see chapter 2.2.1.) restricted also the group that was familiar with them. Towards the latter half of the first millenium BCE *mīmāṃsakas*, members of the philosophical school whose concern was the meaning and usage of the scriptures, gave strict rules about the nature and use of the Vedic corpus.[207] It was *śruti*, "that which has been heard" (by divine inspiration). It was sacred, lacked all worldly (and literary) aims and did not allow expression of personal feelings or artistic creativity. It was in the possession of specialists and only the initiated could have access to it.[208]

These restrictions reflect a tightening grip of the caste system and the attempt of the priestly class to protect its own interests. It faced great challenges from inside and outside. The later Vedic *Upaniṣads* rejected ritualism and propagated a mystical, individual way to the divinity. Buddhism and Jainism were gaining ground. In the last centuries BCE the Vedic religion with its complicated rituals crumbled, waned away and was gradually replaced by new gods and new pattern of religious life. During this change the Vedic texts, however, stood intact and became the liturgical texts of the new religion.

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[206] The threefold division of *itihāsa*, *śāstra* and *kāvya* is found in the *Agnipurāṇa* 337.2, and the twofold division of *śāstra* and *kāvya* in Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* 2.

[207] Of *mīmāṃsakas* see Parpola 1981 and 1994.

[208] This meant the males of three upper classes (*varṇas*) of society (the priests, the nobles and soldiers and the middle class that had wealth or an independent income). The women and the vast masses of workers and peasants as well as those who were outside the *varṇa* system were forbidden to study Veda or take part in the Vedic rituals.

By guarding them the priestly class survived and thrived. It is understandable that these texts attained theoretically an elevated and untouchable status.

The reality of the transmission and treatment of the texts was nevertheless different. Among their preservers there were not only *mīmāṃsakas* but also *aitihāsikas*, those versed in the *itihāsas*, the histories and narratives of the *Ṛgveda*.[209] The evidence that commentators and later writers give proves that Vedic texts were seen to contain narratives that could be adapted, reinterpreted and amplified to tell a longer story. Most of the narratives that made their way from the *Ṛgveda* to later Vedic texts were carried on to the epics and later secular literature. And to give a third proof of continuity, the very words of the original *Ṛgveda* were quoted inside these new stories. This was a way for the new to attain the authority of the old. Similar process can be seen in the epics: the old oral way of presentation with its formulas and repetitions was retained and even emphasized in written versions.

In spite of this the literary research of the *Ṛgveda* has been muted. The respect for tradition has led many Western scholars frown at too liberal attempts to read the Vedic corpus. Jan Gonda, an authority of Vedic studies, was of the opinion that the literary aspects of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* were exaggerated by the European readers of the 19th century and this error should not be repeated. Gonda emphasized the practical purpose of the hymns in rituals and pointed out that modern audience easily misunderstands and overinterprets that which it takes as "lyrical" and personal content.[210] More recently Sheldon Pollock has underlined the separateness of the Vedic culture from the culture that succeeded it.[211] His theory is built on sociolinguistic assumptions. He maintains that the Sanskrit language has been a paw in a political power play, a crown jewel that the priests kept jealously to themselves ("in sacerdotal isolation") during the Vedic and pre-Classical age, until the kings snatched it and put it into literary use in the beginning of the Classical age. Pollock claims that there was a total break between the thousand-year tradition of Veda and the takeover of the language for purely literary use, which began with the *Rāmāyaṇa* and historical upheavals in the first centuries BCE.[212] In Pollock's

[209] See Sieg 1902: 13-36.
[210] Gonda 1975: 156-157.
[211] Pollock 2006.
[212] Pollock 2006: 39-74, 77-79. Pollock borrows the words of the *mīmāṃsakas* when emphasizing the non-literary quality of Veda: *śruti*, the Veda, had "no author" or "artistic intention" (*vivakṣā*), and it has no relation to any other types of texts (40-44). He also accepts the categorization of the literary theorists as such. *Śāstra* is concerned with facts and information, *itihāsa* with history and tradition. The purpose of *kāvya* is to find expression that gives aesthetic pleasure. (76-77). According to Pollock, this division of labour is strict and without exception. See the review of his work by Shulman (2007).

opinion all that looks like literature in earlier texts is accidental and has been invisible to "the traditional audience".[213]

These views do not reflect reality. First, "the sacerdotal isolation" is an illusion: the Ṛgvedic texts contain many different voices, and in the later Vedic texts there is a constant flow of literary material in, out and within. Secondly, early Western readers may have made mistakes by overinterpreting the hymns, but Gonda himself, after pronouncing his caveat, analyses the *poetry* and *narrative* portions of hymns and commentaries in conventional literary terms. He simply cannot do without the basic apparatus of literary studies.[214] The idea of the Vedic corpus as an isolated exception may sound fine in theory but proves to be fragile when talking about the texts themselves in any detail. This has gradually been accepted. In their recent English translation of the *Ṛgveda* Jamison and Brereton emphasize the literary quality and literary influence of the collection.[215]

It is also evident that the strict classification of different texts does not hold in practice. Many texts cross boundaries, above all the *Mahābhārata*, which is a history (*itihāsa*) but also a canonical work: its outer frames place it into a landscape of Vedic rituals, it is even called "the fifth Veda".[216] It also contains passages that belong to *kāvya*.[217] It is improbable that the "traditional audience" has been immune to the poetry of the *Bhagavadgītā*,[218] and modern scholars have even less reason to bind themselves to the idea that only *kāvya* is literature. In addition, *kāvya* itself is not an uniform class. Especially the *miśra* subclass (prose mixed with verse) is riven with contradictions. There

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[213] "(...) the elements of *kāvya* may appear to be present in Vedic texts remembered (*smṛti*), in narratives of the way things were (*itihāsa*), or in the ancient lore (*purāṇa*), as they may in the Veda itself, but they are unintentional and therefore entirely irrelevant — indeed invisible as the *kāvya* — to the traditional audiences" (Pollock 2006: 50).

[214] Gonda 1975: 211-220, 384-409. The important word here is *basic*. In literature some features are more general than others, and the lyric (description) and epic (narrative) kernels and their expressions show great similarity in different cultures. Especially narratives are archetypal and use mutually recognisable motifs: therefore they also travel easily. Recently narratology has embraced generic universalism by treating films, games, visual signs, advertisements, scholarly texts, disciplines like psychology and many other areas of human communication as narratives. See Chatman 1978; Meuter 2013.

[215] "(...) the Ṛgveda is the first monument of this literary tradition and at least the equal of later literature. The exuberance with which the poets press the boundaries of language in order to create their own reflection of the complex and ultimately inpenetrable mysteries of the cosmos and the verbal devices they developed to mirror these cosmic intricacies resonate through the rest of the literary tradition." (2014: 3). Jamison and Brereton believe that the neglect of the *Ṛgveda* as a piece of literature has not been caused by its bond to rituals and the sacred, but by its difficult language and expression.

[216] The Vedic connection of the *Mahābhārata* is discussed in 3.1. and 3.4.

[217] The composers of the *Mahābhārata* could switch in the middle of the text from the epic/narrative metre called *śloka* to a more poetic *anuṣṭubh* when heightened emotions and lyrical expression were required.

[218] In fact, in Indian literary treatises there is very rarely any discussion about types of texts, or rules that would allow each of them only a limited place and space, or the Veda not being literature. This is to be expected for, as said before, the only thing that interests the theorists is *kāvya* and its features.

are such narratives as the *Pañcatantra* and *Śukasaptati* that have some features of *kāvya* but not all of them. They emphasize the plot, which seems to break the rules of *kāvya*.[219] The other representative of the *miśra* class, the classical drama, is equally capricious.[220] Despite of this drama was considered to be the highest of arts in old India.

The shift from the Vedic to the pre-Classical and Classical world was long and gradual: there are no traces of a sudden, radical break or overturning of culture or language which would confirm Pollock's theory. The later Vedic texts, various *śāstras* and the *Mahābhārata* show that the Sanskrit language changed all the time in the hands of its users. The influence of Vedic literature to the later texts was particularly strong in the field of narrative. In words of Gonda: "On the strength of the numerous references and narrative passages in the *Ṛgveda* and the early *Brāhmaṇas* we may be certain that at that period ancient Indian myths were at their richest".[221] When the composers of the *Mahābhārata* define the content of this work as *ākhyāna* (story, narrative), beside the usual *itihāsa* (history, tradition),[222] they implicate that their work is both story and history, something very old and something quite new.[223]

Something should be said of the Vedic literature in relation to the question of "oral" and "written". Some authorities of oral culture dismiss the term "oral literature" e.g. when being applied to texts like the *Ṛgveda*. Walter Ong emphasizes the difference between an oral presentation and a written text and complains that our written culture does not understand how the mind of an oral poet works.[224] He also questions the theory that Vedic hymns were preserved in their original form in memory for a thousand years: he concludes that either they underwent a similar change that oral performances always

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[219] I have written (Hämeen-Anttila 2010 (2005)) that classical *kāvya* literature has a low degree of narrativity, but I would now modify that opinion. Only the late, more baroque works can be said to be static. There is quite a lot happening in the Classical dramas and earlier court epics.

[220] The manual of drama, *Nāṭyaśāstra* (see 1.3. above), dedicates a long chapter to the development of the plot (*itivṛtta*), from the "seed" (*bīja*) through episodes of action, suspense and surprise to the denouement. This proves that the plot and the action were not of secondary importance in some prominent types of *kāvya*. It may also be added that it had a connection with Vedic ritual and Vedic lore. The first chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tells that the drama was born when the other gods asked the creator god Brahmā to create another Veda which would be for all (*sarvalaukikam*), not only for the initiated. Then Brahmā took from each of the four Vedas the pertinent part and they became the four parts of drama (recitative, song, mime and sentiment). According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* the establishment of the stage and its consecration are religious rituals. This contradicts Pollock's theory of the totally secular nature of *kāvya*. See Byrski 1974: 41-61.

[221] Gonda 1975: 384.

[222] Hiltebeitel 2005: 465.

[223] Pollock seems to have dismissed this vast material because it is not written down in complete narratives, but for the most part only implicated in the texts that have been preserved. However, this brevity means that they presuppose the knowledge of the complete oral narrative behind.

[224] Ong 1997 (1982): 10-15.

produce or they were supported by written texts.[225] Here he is partly right and partly wrong. The Vedic corpus shows variance that gives evidence of oral performances behind the fixed form. But Sanskrit was not an ordinary language. From a very early age it was "marked off" as special literary language even when it was used for oral transmission.[226] The new religions, Buddhism and Jainism, that arose in the 7th century BCE, chose also a literary variant of the spoken languages to spread their message. It is not certain when writing took root and spread. The first documented texts, the inscriptions of emperor Aśoka from the 4th century BCE, are not in Sanskrit but in Prakrit. But in old India there were means of preserving texts "mentally" that were extraordinary (see the chapter 2.2. below) and without a parallel in other cultures: this has to be taken into account.

At this point some of the notions of Pollock come in handy. There are degrees of orality and literacy, which Pollock is quite aware of when he talks about the vernaculars which developed in the Classical period (1st century CE onwards). Pollock uses the term *literarization* for the use of language in literary compositions that are transmitted orally, and the word *literization* for the use of writing.[227] When talking about the orality/literariness of the early Vedic texts the word literarization is very accurate, and as Pollock shows, there is evidence of similar oral-literary tradition in later texts.[228]

So, the Vedic corpus displays some oral features but it is basically literary, i.e. it has been composed and constructed in a literary way, even though it was transmitted orally for a long time.[229] It uses formulas and repetition in a different way than oral epics,

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[225] Ong 1997 (1982): 65-66.

[226] The language of the poems was archaic even in the time of composing (see Jamison and Brereton 2014: "Introduction" p. 76). Therefore it is hard to say when exactly Sanskrit ceased to be a natural spoken language. In spite of its archaic diction the *Ṛgveda* shows instability and dialectal variation. It is certain that already at the time of the *Brāhmaṇas* (900-600 BCE) there were *Prakrits* (local spoken languages that had distanced themselves from Vedic Sanskrit), so the divergence of the spoken and the literary nust have taken place before that. Of the Vedic dialects see Witzel 1989.

[227] See Pollock 2006: 5, 23-25, 283-329, 380-397. It is strange that Pollock does not apply his terminology to the earlier intermediate period, where would be much more appropriate.

[228] The model of *scripturation* / *scriptularization* (*Verschriftung* / *Verschriftlichung*) which Tristram (1998: 11-13) has sketched corresponds these terms. Tristram emphasizes the considerable length of the time and various intermediate phases that characterize the change between the oral and the written mode. It is also "an interactive and dynamic process" (1998:11).

[229] Also, it is not "anonymous". Even though the poets that are mentioned by name in the *Ṛgveda* may be mythical, the texts are products of individual authors. "Though orally composed and making use of traditional verbal material, each hymn was composed by a particular poet, who fixed the hymn at the time of the composition and who "owned" it, and it was transmitted in this fixed form thereafter." (Jamison and Brereton 2015: 14). The authors of the *Brāhmaṇas* were less conscious of their artistry than the Vedic poets, but especially the narratives in the *Jaiminīya* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas* show that there was a literary mind behind them.

not mechanically but variably and referentially.[230] Folk tales, for comparison, are usually not literary because of their simple structure and mutability: there is no fixed *discourse* with a fixed structure and wording, but only the *story*.[231] The picture is complex, because these groups were not separate in old India but taking constantly part in the process of exchange, borrowing and adapting.[232] From the fluid and flowing "basic material" of the folk narratives the members of a more sophisticated cultural layer picked up motifs and themes for their own use. In the Vedic age this meant that part of the ancient oral narrative tradition, which must have been for the most part "remarkably consistent",[233] was made literary by incorporating it into the hymns and commentaries.

Mingled with the oral tradition (which was, in spite of being less stabile, also capable of preserving very old fragments), early literary narratives became the source for narratives of pre-Classical and Classical age. Although is is not always possible to specify what were the exact sources and how the motifs and plots came to be adapted, the process itself can be observed in the persistence of certain narrative motifs. Once they had been chosen by Ṛgvedic poets, they were safe and easy to use. It may be supposed that for many brāhmaṇic stories, such as those of Śunaḥśepa and Cyavana, a group of Ṛgvedic core narratives was the only source of a later, more developed narrative. The re-using of fragments of stories stimulated literary creativity, as in most cases the oral story behind the Ṛgvedic discourse had must have disappeared or changed beyond recognition.

Along with this borrowing and adapting the habit of combining of old and new texts was established. It is visible already in the *Ṛgveda*, and it was the germ that developed into frame. It was used to preserve and transmit the tradition while giving it a new meaning or more or less subtly modifying it. A parallel development can be seen in scientific, didactic and literary texts. The older theological texts and *sūtras* were augmented with later exegetic works and commentaries. The compilators of *Jātakas* took old stories and retold them as episodes of Buddha's former lives. And finally, the composers of the *Mahābhārata* inserted multiple tales inside one plot and wrapped multiple frames around it, so that epic resembled a tree that has grown annual rings around it, buried its roots down in the earth and shoot hundreds of branches with smaller twigs

[230] Jamison and Brereton 2014: "Introduction" p. 14. Jamison and Brereton explain that the repetition is present not so much in the surface but in the deep structure, as an awareness of intratextuality in the hymns.
[231] For the "story" and "discourse", see p. 19 n.72. Folk ballads, on the other hand, may have a (partially) fixed structure. Compositions put in verse resist changes better than prose.
[232] In India these levels have been traditionally called "the great tradition" and "the little tradition".
[233] Gonda 1975: 119.

up toward the sky.[234] By recycling and augmenting the literature could both make progress and respect tradition.

To conclude: first, the non-literary use does not make the Vedic corpus non-literature. The *saṃhitās* (hymns and formulas) and the *Brāhmaṇas* (exegesis) were created for religious use: the former to be chanted or recited in rituals[235] and the latter to explain the formulas and ritual acts attached to them. But Vedic seer-poets[236] did not compose their poems only because they were interested in the spiritual realm of the gods. Their poems appeal to gods in order to satisfy earthly needs.[237] Their concerns are human: they fear dark, poverty, hunger, thieves, wolves, loneliness, aging, impotence, sudden death, the horror of being driven from society. The displeasure of gods brings these afflictions, and therefore gods must be praised and appeased, and good things, wealth, health, progeny and long life must be asked from them. Thus, whereas the context of the corpus was the ritual, the things talked about were many times secular,[238] and the seer-poets chose to use mundane words and literary tropes, themes and narratives to get the message through. A literary narrative is a literary narrative if it has qualities to be such[239], despite the fact that it has not been created (or originally used) for literary purposes.[240] The *Mahābhārata* teaches *dharma*, but it has not been received by the traditional audience only because of this: it is also a medley of exiting narratives with gripping characters who

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[234] With this metaphor I do not suggest that the Epic "grew" by itself from inside out during interminable time. It was created by human composers who made deliberate decisions about what stories and structures they would use.

[235] It must be noted that the rituals to which the Ṛgvedic poets referred were not the same as those complicated ceremonies for which the *Brāhmaṇas* try to find an explanation. This is the reason of the semantic and epistemological imbalance between these two groups of texts. See Gonda 1975: 84-88. It is also evident that not all of the hymns were composed for use in the rituals. The early commentator Yāska (6th century BCE, see p. 55 n. 251) is of this opinion and gives the name *itihāsa* to those hymns that contain dialogues and other kinds of narrative sequences.

[236] The Vedic word for "seer-poet" is *ṛṣi*. It brings together the visionary, mystic and creative roles of the poet. Later *ṛṣi* came to mean "a wise and holy man who has a preternaturally long life". The hymns of the *Ṛgveda* are attributed to various seers from a certain family (see next chapter).

[237] See e.g. O'Flaherty 1981: 229.

[238] Once again it must be stressed that older Indian literature was composed or compiled by human beings, not by demi-gods, some ethereal voice or a committee with a uniform totalitarian view of the world. On the other hand, the highly personal and psychologizing approach that e.g. O'Flaherty has adopted does not seem quite right, even though her books are inspiring and testify of a wide and enthusiastic reading in Indian literature, and in addition, have made the general audience aware of a great cultural treasure that has too often been overlooked.

[239] "Literary" again meaning here "that which is composed and constructed using literary techniques".

[240] Besides, there were no official "literary purposes" in old India or any other old culture. Texts were created and used for religious rituals, for preserving and imparting knowledge or for passing time pleasantly.

are put into tight situations.[241] It is not sensible to suggest that the intention of the author(s) was not to write poetry or tell stories and these elements are included in the text only by accident.

Secondly, there was no break between the Vedic, the Epic and the Classical, but gradual development and continuity in the literary tradition. This is particularly clear in the case of narratives. They are present in many types of texts and their recycling form a continous chain from the Vedic corpus to the epics and the works of the Classical age. This is shown e.g. in the narrative of Purūravas and Urvaśī which is told in the *Ṛgveda*, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and in the Classical drama of *Vikramorvaśīyam* by Kālidāsa, and the tale of Śunaḥśepa, first mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* (*śruti*) and then reappearing in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and later in the *Mahābhārata* (*itihāsa*) and in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (*kāvya*).[242] Therefore it is logical to start the search of the frame story from the *Ṛgveda*.

2.2. The structure of Vedic hymns: is there one to be found?

Whereas it is certain that the Vedic corpus contains narratives, the processes of framing and embedding are not immediately visible. In the *Saṃhitās* (the hymns) and *Brāhmaṇas* (the commentaries) the primary levels (primary frames) seem at the first glance to show a low degree of narrativity. In the former the primary level is a prayer in verse, in the latter it is a description of a ritual. However, bringing into mind what was said in the preceeding chapters, one must take a deeper and wider approach. Poems have narrators. Descriptions, especially when they apply different voices, may contain narratives of their own kind.[243] And they can be frames for narratives.

Before going to the texts in detail, something must be said about their arrangement and history.[244] The most ancient layer of the Vedic corpus contains four

[241] The gigantic Indian television series made of this epic in the 1980s works at times like an action movie, at times like a soap opera and at times as a tableau of statues holding solemn speeches, so that there are many possibilities to read this text.
[242] As this study concetrates on narratives, I will not discuss the poetical aspects of the *Ṛgveda* and their continuity.
[243] See the chapter 2.6. below.
[244] The editions and translations are discussed in the chapter 1.3.

Saṃhitās ("collections")[245] of which the *Ṛgveda* ("The (sacred) lore of the verses") is the oldest[246]. It contains 1028 poems and is usually dated ca. 1200 - 1000 BCE, but parts of it may be older. There is no evidence that the text had a written form before the 3rd or 2nd century BCE. The earliest extant manuscripts of the *Ṛgveda* and other Vedic texts are very late, i.e. dating from the 11th century CE onwards. However, on the basis of the rigorous methods of oral preservation and a linguistic analysis of the preserved text the dating above is mostly seen as valid.[247] It has been noted that in many instances the written tradition of literary texts in India has proved to be less reliable than the oral.[248]

The *Ṛgveda* has been arranged into ten books (*maṇḍalas*[249]). The arrangement is later than the composition but precedes the consolidation of the texts into recensions (6th century BCE). Books II-VIII ("the family books") form the core of the collection. Books I and X are as wholes later than these. Most of the hymns are dedicated to Indra, the king of the gods and a warrior deity. A considerable bulk of hymns is directed to Agni who is the priest of the gods and the personification of the sacrificial fire.[250] Many of the other

[245] The Vedic corpus consist of different types of texts. The oldest are the *Saṃhitās*, collections of hymns and their melodies and sacrificial and magical formulas, mostly in verse (c. 1200-900 BCE). Next came the *Brāhmaṇas*, which comment on rituals mostly in prose (c. 900-600 BCE). Rituals for public and private use are described in the handbooks (*Śrauta*- and *Gṛhyasūtras*, c. 600-400 BCE). The *Upaniṣads* and *Āraṇyakas* (c. 700-500 BCE) deal with the esoteric explanation of the universe. The classes were further divided by the *Saṃhitā* they were attached to and, inside this, by the school (*śākhā*, "a branch") they belonged to. The chronology of these classes is blurred by the fact that the first specimens of "later" class could precede the late specimens of the "earlier" class and the presence of older and newer layers in the individual texts.

[246] Of the four *Saṃhitā* collections the *Ṛgveda* is the only one that is preserved mainly in one recension (the so-called Śākala recension). Others have been lost or fallen from use. The other *Saṃhitās* (the *Sāmaveda*, "The lore of the songs", the *Yajurveda*, "The lore of the magic formulas" and the *Atharvaveda*, "The lore of the magic charms") are preserved in recensions of several schools named after families and/or sages that had preserved the text. Thus e.g. the recension of the *Sāmaveda* traditionally attached to the sage Jaimini is called the *Jaiminīya*. The schools operated in different regions and their relation to each other is reflected in the texts. The division to schools and their text recensions applies also to other Vedic text types (*Brāhmaṇas*, ritual *Sūtras*, *Upaniṣads* and *Āraṇyakas*).

[247] During the time of the *Brāhmaṇas* (ca. 9th century BCE onwards) simple Vedic rites developed to complicated rituals that, together with the officiating priests, controlled and guarded the stability of the cosmos. The idea was that not even a syllable or a sound of the verses could be "lost" by changing it because this would lead to a disaster. This worked most of the time: there is variation but considerably less than one would expect in an oral culture. The texts were transmitted each within an endogenous group ("family") by various mnemonic exercises. When the texts underwent final codification, these exercises were attached to them. Another way to protect the texts were the lexical and phonological commentaries (*prātiśākhya*) that went with the text. See Gonda 1975: 7-54; 55-63 summarizes the history of the Vedic studies.

[248] See Wackernagel 1896: 33, 47, 111.

[249] The word *maṇḍala* means generally "a disc" and "a circle". It refers specifically to a magic circle, but also to the sun's halo, or an area or a province, or a sphere of power of the king.

[250] Similarly Soma is both the sacrificial drink and a god (connected with the moon). The book IX is dedicated to this god. The books I-VIII and X put hymns for Indra and Agni in the beginning. The books were arranged from shortest to longest, according to families. The hymns in each book were arranged by god and by poet, and within these groups, from the shortest to the longest. It is not known which authority

gods are connected to natural powers, e.g. sun, dawn, winds and thunderstorm, which gives scope to rich and vivid poetic imagery. The last book (X) is characterized by speculative hymns about the mysteries of creation, universe and death.

In spite of preservative measures Vedic texts changed by time. According to Gonda's estimate, the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* came into being during "some hundreds of years" (ca. 1500-1000 BCE), after which they were collected by families of poets and, within them, prepared for oral transmission. The commentator Yāska[251] says that the final codification of the text (ca. 600 BCE) was done because the culture of oral transmission was in decline.[252] There are discrepancies and traces of changes. It is hard to tell whether it is due to these alterations that in many places the hymns appear to be incoherent, and words and phrases are hard to understand. Verses could also have dropped out, and the writers of commentaries and ritual *sūtras* have later changed the order of the verses to make the text suit the rituals. Obscure allusions and words are irrevocably lost, if there is no supporting information. For the present study the most significant fact is that many hymns show such variation in metre, style and emphasis that is not likely to be dependent on the factors mentioned above. They may arise from deliberate stylistic choice, but the reason in many cases is that the poems have been composed by combining different texts.

It is impossible to know who the concrete authors of the poems have been. The poems are attributed to families of poet-seers and to individual poets within them, but the attributions were attached to the text only later, some time before 6th century BCE, in the form of *Anukramaṇīs* (indices). Of course, there was a reason to organize the collection around "the family books" (II-VIII), and it is likely that certain clans were responsible for the preservation of clusters of hymns that they considered to be born within their group, because these clusters show affinity in language, metre, structure and theme. The supporting evidence from other texts indicates that the names of the families and some important names of individuals may have been accurately recorded and passed on. As stated in the chapter 2.1.2, the texts themselves show that they have been created by individual poets. But another thing is whether the five hundred names of the poets and the biographies attached to them are "true", i.e. referring to a definite person, bearing that

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was responsible of the arranging. Witzel (e.g. 2003) suggests that the work began under the Bharata tribe and was completed by the Kurus some time after 1000 BCE.

[251] Yāska was the author of the *Nirukta* (The Etymology"), that provided an exegesis for the Vedic hymns. He lived before the 6th century BCE. See Gonda 1975: 32-33.

[252] It is not certain when the *Ṛgveda* took a written form: not before the 2nd century BCE is one estimate. See Gonda 1975: 15-18.

name, having lived and breathed before 1000 BCE and composed just that particular poem. In the case of individual poems one always has to consider the possibility that the text has given inspiration for the name and the biography. There is ample evidence of this in later literature.

Therefore it is safer to read the poems without giving too much weight to the attributions. They reveal something, but they do not tell how the poem was put together, nor do they guarantee that poets speak "as themselves" (i.e. as persons to whom the poem is attributed). The Ṛgvedic poets were experts in their field. The creative act involved changing style, tone, voice and *persona* according to what the poem needed.

After this introduction it is time to look closer at the poems. The primary level of a Ṛgvedic text is a prayer that includes an invitation for the god to come to the ritual, a eulogy for the god, a plea for help or material benefit, and sometimes a charm, a myth or a legend connected to the god, or a narrative in a dramatic form. The poem uses verse form and poetical technique. The latter includes euphonic words, similes, metaphors, parallelism and repetition, mostly by an anaphora (repeating of a word or words that begin a sequence), similar sentence structures or a refrain at the end of the half-verse. The similes are especially common, because the Vedic religion abounded with all kinds of equivalences and connections (*bandhu*).[253] The poems are usually not longer than ten or twelve stanzas. Stanzas are normally divided into two syntactic units.[254]

The primary narrator speaks mostly as the poet who is composing or has composed the hymn. The narratee can be the god or a godlike creature (e.g. the sacrificial horse in I.163) who is the recipient of the prayer. S/he can be addressed with the familiar you (*tvā*, *tvām*, "you" 2nd pers. sg.) and with vocative case, or spoken of in the 3rd person. The narrator may also speak as one of worshippers with 1st pers. plural (*vayam*), as in the hymn to Agni, the priest of gods and the god of sacrificial fire (I.1.7.): "To you, Agni, the one who lightens the darkness, we come day after day"; and "We have gone past this darkness, as we worshipped the gods and sang their praises" (VII.73.1.). The 1st person singular appears often in the beginning of the hymn, like in I.1.1.: "I praise Agni, (he who is) the domestic priest, the divine minister of the sacrifice...", where the tone resembles

[253] Jamison and Brereton 2014: "Introduction" p. 23-24. E.g. the dawn is connected with cows, the sun with fire, the ritual with chariot and the ritual ground with cosmos. When Indra drinks soma, his cheek "swells like the sea, his gullet [expands] like the wide waters" (I.8.7.), and after having killed the demon Vṛtra, he draws off "like a frightened falcon through the airy realms" (I.32.14).

[254] The most frequent metres are the *anuṣṭubh* (4 x 8 syllables), the *triṣṭubh* (4 x 11 syllables) and the *jagatī* (4 x 12 syllables). The metres were associated with different gods, subjects and moods. See Gonda 1975: 173-177.

the beginning of an epic (cf. “Of the arms and men I sing” of Virgil). It may be sustained throughout the text or, like in this same hymn, be switched to 1st person plural in the end (I.1.7, I.1.9). The narrator can be actually "a seer" who poses as a witness of mythic event: “I saw him (the child Agni) with his golden teeth and pure colour... ” (V.2.3). But usually the narrators refer to themselves as creators, whom gods give inspiration: “Poetic inspiration having taken me, I have composed this hymn of praise for you...” (V.2.11).

There are exceptions to these basic narrator-narratee roles. At times the 1st person narrator impersonates the voice of the god who speaks to worshippers, as in the hymn X.125. for the Vāc, a goddess of Speech: “I am the one who blows like the wind and embraces all creatures” (X.125.8.). The narrator may also hide behind a neutral voice in philosophical speculations or mythical descriptions. This happens in many of the hymns of the book X, e.g. the hymn of the primeval man Puruṣa and his sacrifice (X.90.). But the poet-narrator never disappears. There is only a change of attitude, like in the creation hymn X.129., where the circle of narratees that shares the doubt and wonder of the narrator's questions seems to widen and embrace all human beings.[255] In the monologue and dialogue (*samvāda*) hymns the narrator-characters dominate the text, and the poet-narrator may use a personal 1st person sg. voice that is distinct from the characters, or a more distant voice of an observer and a commentator.

When one tries to describe the structure of the hymns, the problems begin. Alas, there is no standard structure.[256] The hymns, or poems, have many features in common, but principles according to which they arrange their material vary from poem to poem. However, there are some regular schemes that some types of hymns use, and I will pick these up for an analysis.

This means that my evidence for the framing in the Vedic hymns is selected: it does not represent all of the *Ṛgveda* but only about 5 percent of it (ca. 50 hymns that have a particular composite structure or an embedded monologue or dialogue). Still I maintain that this selection counts, because: a. there may be much more composite hymns than the clear cases, and b. both the myths that are scattered all over the corpus and the narratives that are told in a more elaborate form in the *samvāda* (monologue and dialogue) hymns were transferred to later literature and, in addition, the last-mentioned continued to be

[255] Expressions of doubt and questioning are not limited to the late books. There are even many intimations of despair and loss throughout the corpus.
[256] Jamison 2004: 237: “There are no overt, regularly recurring organizing principles of Ṛgvedic hymnic composition.” See also Jamison and Brereton 2014: “Introduction” p. 62-63.

recycled in a form that includes a frame and an embedding. The importance of the Vedic hymns for the history of the frame shows also in the way they were re-used: the Ṛgvedic verses were lifted in their original form from their context and fitted inside other texts in the *Brāhmaṇas* and in the *Bṛhaddevatā*.

The Ṛgvedic hymn has often three sections that have a different emphasis and length in each case. This contributes to the variation in the structures. The three-part sequence includes (i) an invocation of a particular god, (ii) words of praise of him/her and a description of his/her qualities, and (iii) a recapitulation and final eulogy or request of a general or particular type.

Those poems that are connected to rituals concentrate on the participation of the god in the course of ritual.[257] This kind of poem has usually a loose, sprawling form which cannot be categorized. But the poem becomes at once more interesting and distinctive, if the description in the part (ii) includes a single myth of the deed of the god, or a list of these. The poems that contain one myth are mostly directed to Indra, or they belong to the group of *saṃvāda* hymns which often have human speakers. The list of deeds is common when addressing All-gods, or the Aśvins, who are twin horseman gods famous for their ability to heal and rescue humans.[258]

The gods can be praised in similar words and phrases (henotheism), but their myths, once they come up, are individual and characterize them. The myth mentioned most often in the hymns for Indra is the slaying of the demon Vṛtra ("Coverer" or "Obstacle") and releasing the waters[259] captured by this demon in a cave.[260] The god Viṣṇu is characterized by the myth of his covering the cosmos in three strides. Agni hides or is hidden in the water, which means that the sacrifices are in danger. The Aśvins are connected with healing, rejuvenation and marriages. Et cetera.

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[257] E.g. the god Indra is invited, he comes, he is offered *soma*, he drinks *soma* etc.

[258] See p. 65 n. 280; p. 109 n. 448.

[259] Indra is the protector of the five rivers, i.e. the five tributaries of Indus that mark the area of greater Panjab (Pañc-ab, "Five Waters"): this was the world of the *Ṛgveda*.

[260] Gonda (1975: 114-115) emphasizes the myth's function as a prototype for the present and give power and ability to reiterate the deeds of the gods. Indra, the epitome of a heroic warrior, slays other demons too: Vala, Śambara, Namuci, Śuṣṇa. Besides being a warrior and a demon-slayer, Indra is characterized in the hymns by his passion for the *soma*. This was the sacrificial drink of the Vedic ritual. It was prepared by pressing the *soma* plant through a sieve. It is not certain what plant was used. The verb *mad-* that is associated with it may mean "be elated" and "be invigorated" but also "become drunk", and descriptions of the effects of drinking *soma* (especially X.119) point to a particularly hyperactive and enpowered state. Ephedra has stimulating properties but it is fairly mild. Those scholars who believe that *soma* was not only stimulating but psychoactive, have proposed such plants as fly agaric and mountain rue.

As mentioned earlier, myths are referred to in a short-hand style with allusions and references, not by telling the whole story. The stories can be partly or wholly reconstructed when they are referred to in several hymns, but they do not form systematic mythology[261]: that was built only later, first in the *Brāhmaṇas* and then in the *Purāṇas*. The narrator holds his tongue, because the hymns are too short to allow long narratives when they have so many other purposes, and also because the full narrative is unnecessary: the audience is familiar with the "back-story". One other reason might be the tendency of the Ṛgvedic poets to be challenging and enigmatic, which is shown clearly in the hymns that present a riddle or contain philosophical ruminations.[262]

Sometimes, however, the hymn may tell a more complete story. A famous hymn to Indra (I.32.) is sometimes called a mini-epic. Here are the stanzas 1-3. The "snake" is Vṛtra and Tvaṣṭar is the smith of the gods.[263]

1. Now I shall proclaim the heroic deeds of Indra,
the first that he performed, wielding the mace.
He smashed the snake and split open the waters,
he slit the bellies of the mountains.

2. He slew the snake which was resting on the mountain
— the resounding mace Tvaṣṭar had forged him —
Like bellowing cows rapidly running
the waters went straight down to the sea.

3. Acting like a bull he chose to drink the *soma*[264];
He drank of the pressed [draught] in the Trikadrukas (?).
The generous one took up his missile,
and slew him that was the first-born of snakes.

The rest of the stanzas (there are 15 in all) retell the happenings above (Indra killing the snake which then lies broken) with new phrases and details. The battle seems very uneven, Indra is overwhelmingly victorious, and only in the stanzas 12-13 the snake is able to fight back. Otherwise the retelling does not add anything to the story. The only piece of information, which is new, comes in the stanza 9: Vṛtra's mother appears out of nowhere:

9. The strength of Vṛtra's mother ebbed away:

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[261] As said before, this does not mean that the mythology behind the texts would not be consistent. It is only that the hymns do not describe it in an orderly way: they presuppose it.
[262] See Jamison 2004: 246-248.
[263] In some hymns he appears as Indra's enemy, and in the *Brāhmaṇas* Indra has his son killed.
[264] See n. 260.

Indra had raised his deadly weapon against her.
The mother was above, the son was below;
Dānu[265] lies like a cow beside her calf.[266]

The hymn definitely contains a story, even if it is somewhat incoherent. The narrator promptly announces what he shall tell about: the heroic deeds of Indra. There is a sequence of four events: (i) Indra drinks *soma* to fortify himself; (ii) Indra takes his weapon (*vajra*)[267] and strikes with it the gigantic snake Vṛtra; (iii) Vṛtra falls down and is killed, and (iv) the waters that Vṛtra has held captive in a mountain cave are released.

The episodic and fragmentary character,[268] repetitiveness and atmosphere of mystery that is created by shady or unconnected allusions are typical of most narratives of the *Ṛgveda*. According to Jan Gonda, the Vedic poet had "a series of mythological or legendary events" connected to a god, from which he chose the ones that suited the poem at hand, "weaving marvellous elements around the central themes"[269]. The purpose of the poet was to find fitting and striking images for the hymn, not to tell a complete story. On the other hand, the characterization of the persons and the narrative details can be remarkably vivid and dramatic.

So, I.32 is a narrative, but it is not a frame narrative. There is only the primary level with a primary narrator telling a story in 1st person. But next some other hymns will be inspected, and in these we can see structures that are *almost* frames.

2.2.1. The "proto-framing" in the Ṛgveda

There are many hymns in which the poetic sequence is broken once or twice by a change of topic, narratorial voice — distance, tone, diction, phrasing — and even poetic metre. Often “a group” that is thus segmented from the others contains three verses (a triad,

[265] Dānu is the name of Vṛtra's mother. She has also other children. They are collectively known as Dānavas.
[266] My translation.
[267] *Vajra* is a kind of a hammer. Usually the word is translated as “a (thunder)bolt” but a “mace” would be a more accurate word. “A bolt” makes the weapon look like that of Zeus. The word *vajra* is behind the Finno-Ugric **vaśara*, “hammer” (a very early loan from Proto-Aryan or Indo-Aryan).
[268] The narrative in this hymn as in many others is presented in set pieces, not as a coherent, chronological plot. The rule of sequentality (see p. 24) is not obeyed most of all because the style of presentation is poetic.
[269] Gonda 1975: 216.

tṛca). In these so-called composite hymns the groups are arranged so that the most meaningful portion is put in the middle and other groupings symmetrically around it to form a sequence A-B-A or A-B-C-B-A. This structure was noticed in early Greek poetry in the 1940s by W. A. A. Van Otterlo, who called it the *ring composition*.[270] Stephanie Jamison has paid attention to its occurence in the *Ṛgveda* and noted that especially in the "riddle hymns" there can be several concentric layers around the core, which presents the riddle.[271] Joel Brereton had earlier pointed out that the famous philosophical Nāsadīya hymn (X129) places its climax in the middle.[272]

This structure which is in the *Ṛgveda* quite regular and marked with several concentric rings around a centre, is called an *omphalos* (navel) structure by Jamison. She has analysed it closely in the dialogue hymn X.28. (a conversation between Indra, his son and and the son's wife concerning a failed sacrifice), I.105. ("Trita in the well"), V.47. (a numerical riddle), VII.33. (another numerical riddle) and IV.5. (a hymn to Agni which contains a mystical message that is put in the centre).[273] In these hymns the structural idea is to descend via two successive layers which both have two verses (Jamison's prototype has 7 verses) into the verse in the centre, which has a riddle or a mystery, or represents the climax of action or emotion. Then follows a symmetrical rising sequence of two successive layers with two verses in each.

A ring composition in the classical literature is not the same as the frame structure, but the *omphalos* has more in common with it. There are differences between the layers and in the voice of the poet-narrator, and the centre stands out by being markedly different from the other parts of the sequence.

I will give two further examples of this structure. The first is the hymn VII.86. for the god Varuṇa, which contains a part of the legend of Vasiṣṭha. Vasiṣṭha is a sage and a seer who appears also in later narratives. He is called Maitravaruṇi, "the son of Mitra and Varuṇa", i.e. having a special relationship to these two gods, but in the hymns Indra and Varuṇa are coupled and praised together. All the hymns in the book VII are attributed to him, which is unusual: it is clear that they were composed by many different poets which may have belonged to his clan. His personage, or more accurately his poetic persona and his name appears in some of the poems, and this is one of them.

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[270] See e.g. Gaisser 1969: 3-5. The ring composition can be found in most old Indo-European literatures. See Watkins 1995: 34, 214-225, 370-382 (the ring composition in the poems of Pindar).
[271] Jamison 2004.
[272] Jamison 2004: 240.
[273] Jamison 2004: 240-247.

Jamison has analysed also this poem.[274] To her the speaker is one and the same from beginning to end, i.e. "Vasiṣṭha" (not a historical person but a *persona* put on by the poet). Jamison believes that the poem reflects the distance and nearness between Vasiṣṭha and Varuṇa, shown by the use of personal pronouns. They start from the complete break of the stanza 1 to near each other, Vasiṣṭha leading and Varuṇa following, until in the 4th stanza they are both present as "I" and "you". Then they start to grow apart again, Vasiṣṭha leading and Varuṇa following.

For many reasons I do not find this interpretation totally convincing. The hymn certainly has an *omphalos* structure: it is composed using concentric layers of stanzas, and the poet has taken on the persona of Vasiṣṭha. But I believe that this persona appears only in the centre of the *omphalos*. Why should the neutral 3rd person narrator in the beginning and at the end be Vasiṣṭha? And why should Vasiṣṭha approach Varuṇa by expressing his distance to the god with the use of pronouns, and then turn around and make his retreating movement known again with the use of pronouns? This sounds forced and mechanical.

Here is the poem. The layers are marked. The outermost layer is typed in normal script, the second one is in italic. The centre is indicated by bold and italic.

1. Wisdom has been given to races by his power,
who has pushed apart the two wide halves of the world.
He has elevated the dome of the sky to make it high and noble;
He has set the sun to its course and spread out the earth.

2. So I ask from my inner soul:
When shall I be close to Varuṇa?
Will he take my offering and suppress his anger?
When shall I see his mercy, and rejoice?

3. I ask myself what was my transgression, Varuṇa;
I want to understand it, so I turn to the wise.
The seers have told me the very same thing:
You have provoked the anger of Varuṇa.

4. O Varuṇa, what was the terrible crime,
that makes you wish to destroy a friend who praises you?
Tell me, so that I may quickly prostrate myself and be free of sin,
before you, the one without a ruler, the one who cannot be deceived.

5. Free us from the evil deeds of our fathers,
And those deeds that our bodies have committed.

[274] Jamison 2007: 96-100.

O king, free Vasiṣṭha like a thief who has stolen cattle,
like a calf set free from a cord.

6. The mischief was not done by my own free will, o Varuṇa;
wine, anger, dice, or carelessness led me astray.
The older shares the mistakes of the younger,
Even sleep will not hinder the evil.

7. As a slave serves a generous master
so I wish to serve the angry god and be free from sin.
The noble god gave understanding to those who lacked it,
him who has become wise, the wise-making god will lead to riches.

8. O Varuṇa, who are ruled by nobody but yourself,
let this praise reach you and stay deep in your heart.
Let it all go well for us, be it war or peace,
preserve us always with your blessings.[275]

The outermost stanzas 1 and 8 use a general and impersonal voice. Stanza 1 describes Varuṇa without revealing who speaks and without mentioning the god's name. In stanza 8 the narrator appeals to Varuṇa with a vocative and uses 1st person plural, speaking for "us" (worshippers, or all humanity), and appeals to Varuṇa, again in a general and impersonal way. The next layer of stanzas, 2-3 and 6-7, switch to the first person[276], but retain a distant attitude. The stanza 2 is coloured by the three questions: the speaker comes with an offering, but he is riddled with doubt, and he fears for the anger of the god. The stanza 3 expresses also trembling incomprehension. The anger of the god tells that the speaker has done something wrong, but when he asks the wise what it is that he has done, they only confirm what he already knows. Their counterpart, stanzas 6-7, keep also the reason of the god's anger hidden. The stanza 6, in fact, explains that it can be anything, because life is full of traps (such as wine, anger, dice or carelessness), and one can sin even in his sleep. The speaker resolves in the stanza 7 to put aside logical reasoning, throw himself simply on the god's mercy and serve him as a slave.

In these two layers there is nothing that tells about the identity of the speaker or about his personal relationship to Varuṇa. The outermost layer (1 and 8) is neutral and calm, there is no mention of Varuṇa being angry at anybody. The second layer brings a solitary voice into focus, and s/he is nervous and fearful. All that s/he knows is that the god is angry. The word "anger" is repeated in stanzas 2 , 3 and 6, and the word "angry"

[275] My translation.
[276] They are not as intimate as the stanzas 4-5 because they do not mention the crucial motif of friendship (Vasiṣṭha had been a bosom friend of Varuṇa) and give various reasons for the misbehaviour in (7): it is not very likely that Vasiṣṭha of the stanzas 4-5 would have been guilty of all of them.

in stanza 7. The stanza 6 reveals one cannot live without doing something wrong, so Varuṇa will be angry at all times, unless one shows utmost deference.

The centre, stanzas 4-5, is quite different from the outer layers. It brings the conflict to a very personal level, and now it is clear that the speaker is Vasiṣṭha, although he talks about himself in 3rd person. The words chosen are extreme and emotional. The crime has been "terrible" and the god wants to "destroy" the sinner, who is no less than his "friend". The speaker wants to "quickly prostrate" himself to be free from sin.[277]

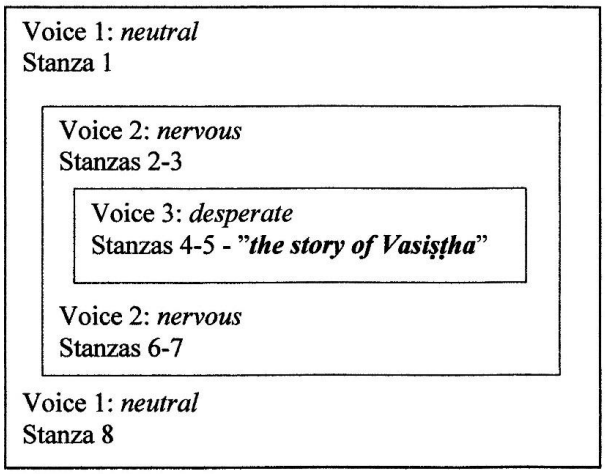
Instead of the approaching and retreating Vasiṣṭha, I hear three different voices in the poem, as descibed before. The first is neutral, the second is nervous, the third is desperate. My suggestion is that the poet uses three personas, putting up a drama for three persons (or a chorus). The first voive belongs to somebody who is not particularly involved. It may be the combined voice of the worshippers. They revere the god but do not have any special reason to worry. The second speaker is an individual worshipper, who approaches the god fearfully, perhaps with a guilty conscience. The speaker in the centre is "Vasiṣṭha", who has an intimate relation with the god and who is completely shaken when Varuṇa is angry.[278]

Even though it cannot be said that the persona of the first layer is a narrator for the second layer and the persona of the second layer is the narrator of the "Vasiṣṭha core", there are three layers or circles of three voices which envelop each other so that the most emotional and intimate voice is in the centre. The Vasiṣṭha core looks like a quotation, or "a case study". It is not easy to define what kind of structure this is. The poem can be seen as a short drama for three voices, or an elementary double frame which encloses a mini-narrative telling about a friendship that is broken, feelings of fear and guilt and desperate attempts to reconcile.[279]

The layers and the core with their separate voices can be illustrated by a diagram.

[277] Alternatively, the stanzas 3 and 6 could be included in the "personal" kernel inside the "impersonal" frame, as they both proclaim that the speaker has done some misdeed that has made Varuṇa angry.
[278] It is possible that the layers are of different origin. The outermost layer in particular looks very general and even commonplace compared to the inner layers.
[279] One study that has taken up Jamison's notion of the *omphalos* structure is Forte and Smith 2014, who call it "a wheel". In their article they compare Vedic and old Greek examples.

Diagram 2. The structure of RV VII.86.



Another example of a mini-narrative inside an elementary frame is the hymn V.78. to the Aśvins.[280] Ludwig Alsdorf has drawn attention to it in his article[281]. Using Paul Thieme's term he calls it a "legend spell"[282]: in this kind of a text "an account of a historical or mythological event is followed by an incantation, a spell receiving its magic power from the truth of the story, analogous to the desired effect, which precedes it".[283]

Two legends are referred to inside the hymn. Atri has been released from a pit and Saptavadhri from a wooden cage or a hut or a crack of a tree[284], both by the help of

[280] Aśvins ("horsemen"), the twin gods, are never referred to individually but always as a pair. They are quite prominent in the Vedic corpus. They have almost always positive connotations. They are healers and restorers (as in V.78) and match-makers for young girls (as in X.40 below). They are conceived to be younger than some other deities and therefore they have not been allowed to take part in the *soma* sacrifice. The Cyavana story tells how they attained this right (see 2.3.2.).
[281] Alsdorf 1974b: 49-55.
[282] *Legendenzauber*; see Thieme 1963.
[283] Alsdorf 1974: 49. The hymn X.34 ("The Gambler's Lament") is an eloquent "legend spell". Most of the hymn is taken by a monologue of a gambler who gives a gripping account of the force and disastrous results of his obsession. In the last but one stanza the god Savitṛ admonishes the man: " 'Do not play with dice, but till your field; enjoy your possessions, give it a high value. There are your cattle, there is your wife, o gambler.' Thus speaks the noble Savitṛ." (13) Savitṛ ("The vivifier") is the god that gives one energy, light and life of the Sun. He is seen as an aspect of the Sun. -- The last stanza of X.34. contains the charm spoken by the poet: "Grant me your friendship, have pity on me, do not bind me with your terrible magic. Lay down your anger and your hatred. Let someone else be fettered with the brown dice." (14)
[284] It might be that Atri and Saptavadhri are the same person and Saptavadhri ("Seven times made impotent") is an epitheton for Atri, who is a well-known Vedic figure (see e.g. Jamison 1991: 211-263). The myth referred to here is Atri being trapped in some dark, narrow place. It is elsewhere described as

the Aśvins. Atri's story is told by the narrator, Saptavadhri speaks with his own voice, but as in the Varuṇa hymn above, speaking of himself in 3rd person. The legends are framed by an initial section of three stanzas (*tṛca*), which invite the Aśvins to drink *soma*, and a final *tṛca*, which present the purpose of the hymn: it is a charm for an easy birth. A connection between the charm and the legends is made by comparing the two men in tight places to a woman in labour whose child must also get out through a narrow tunnel. In the translation the two parts of the framing and the core with the two legends are distinguished by the Roman numbers I-III. The "general voice" is in normal script, the reference of to the story of Atri in italic and the quotation spoken by Saptavadhri in bold italic.

I
1. O Aśvins, come here, o Nāsatyas[285]:
do not turn away!
Like two geese fly here to the pressed (*soma*).
2. O Aśvins, like two gazelles,
like two buffaloes (hastening) to a meadow,
like two geese fly here to the pressed (*soma*).
3. O Aśvins, rich with mares,
accept our sacrifice with favor and grant out desire!
Like two geese fly here to the pressed (*soma*).

II
4. When Atri descended into the pit
and invoked you like a woman in need of delivery,
o Aśvins, you came with the happy swiftness of falcon,
the same swiftness that you show even now.
5. "O tree, open like the womb of a woman about to give birth!
O Aśvins, hear my call, and release Saptavadhri!
6. "For the frightened, distressed seer Saptavadhri,
you, o Aśvins, squeeze the tree and open it. "

III
7. As the wind sets in motion the lotus pond on all sides,
so shall your embryo move;
he shall come out, being ten months old.
8. As the wind, as the tree, as the sea moves,
so come down, you who are ten months old,
together with the after-birth.
9. The boy who has been resting in his mother for ten months,
shall come out alive and unharmed,
alive out of the living one!

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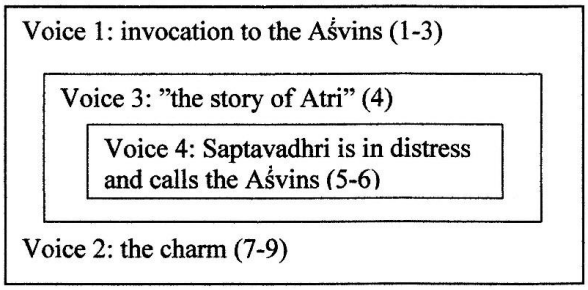
fiery and scorching; "a hot kettle" (RV VIII.73). Here Saptavadhri seems to be in different kind of a trap: it is made of wood or being inside a tree.
[285] Another name for the Aśvins. Its etymology is uncertain.

Alsdorf is of the opinion that this is definitely a composite hymn, i.e. a compilation made of pre-existent material.[286] Many authorities agree on the fact that the last three stanzas that contain the charm (III) are younger than the rest of the hymn. The first three stanzas that summon the Aśvins to drink *soma* (I) come also from another source. They do not have any connection to the other parts (except that they are directed to the Aśvins) and they are written in a different metre (*uṣṇih*, which is rare). According to Alsdorf that they were probably added last to link the hymn more markedly with the Aśvins, because the fourth stanza begins with Atri and mentions the Aśvins only in the end.[287] The charm does not mention the Aśvins at all. The two inserted legends are also in different metre: the Atri stanza uses *triṣṭubh*, the Saptavadhri stanzas *anuṣṭubh*. Considering all this it seems clear that the hymn was put together exactly as Alsdorf suggests.[288]

In this hymn the core has two parts. There is an introductory part which refers to the myth of Atri: he descended (or fell, or was cast) to a pit, and the Aśvins helped him out of it. Then comes the most emotional passage, stanza 5, in which Saptavadhri yells that he is trapped inside a tree and is "frigthened and distressed", and calls the Aśvins. So two voices are heard in the core. The scheme looks like this.

Diagram 3. The structure of RV V.78.



[286] Jamison and Brereton (2014: 760) note that by its position the hymn should have less stanzas, which also implies that it is a composite hymn.
[287] Alsdorf 1974: 51-55.
[288] The starting-point may have been the charm: it was prefixed by two old myths that provided an analogous example, and after that an invocation of the Aśvins was added to the beginning to bring coherence and give the hymn a proper prelude.

Because the structure is not quite the frame, I have chosen to use the word "voice" instead of "narrator" in the analysis. As said above, we cannot firmly establish the voices of the outer layers to be the narrators for the inner layers. A cruder way to illustrate the *omphalos* would be to put all voices inside the same box, marking them to be on the same level (actors/characters in "a drama"), and indicate their succession only by arrows. In my opinion, however, there is a clear hierarchy between the voices, so that the the outermost voices in the diagrams 2 and 3 are on a higher, more general level, and the stanzas are common and applicable for any poem which has the same theme. The lower/inner level in VII.86. is represented by Voice 2 (nervous), which is different in mode and diction from the Voice 1 (neutral). A second shift occurs between voices 2 and 3 (desperate), the voice in the core showing high emotion. In the V.78. the outer frame is divided by two voices, one for the evocation and one for the charm, and the core is also divided between "the story of Atri" and the quotation from the speech of Saptavadhri. Both are personal, but the latter is immediate and present, whereas the former is set in the past, so there is a hierarrchy between distance and nearness. Finally we must note that the poet-narrator impersonates all these people and "narrates" their stories.

There are other hymns in the *Ṛgveda* that have been analysed to be composite hymns.[289] Like the Varuṇa hymn above, many of them are not necessarily composed by combining pre-existent texts, but created by the same author using suitable legend to be inserted in his poem. However, there are clearer examples of the use of older material in connection with various charms and spells, and these show development towards a real frame. The dialogue hymns are discussed in the next chapter. Here I present two monologue hymns. In both the voice of a woman is heard. This is unusual in the Vedic corpus as whole, but common in the monologues and dialogues which deal almost always with the relations of men and women.

The short hymn VIII.91. is for Indra. The god is approached by a young woman whose name, Apalā, is given in a magic charm in the end of the hymn. In the beginning she is only spoken of as "a girl". Her speech is in italic, the rest is the frame spoken by the poet-narrator. Technically, the speech by "the girl" is quoted by the narrator. But her monologue contains a description of what she is doing and thinking and also of Indra's reaction to this. In the chapter 2.1.1. above[290] I mentioned the theoretical option to analyse inserted speech of a character as an embedding. Here this option is most relevant, because

[289] See Gonda 1975: 191-192.
[290] See p. 44 .

it is the girl who tells what happens (i.e. provides the narrative), not the poet-narrator, who only introduces the character. This makes the girl a narrator-character who is telling her story. In the translation the speech of the girl is marked with italic.

1. A girl who went to the water found soma in her way.
She brought it home and said: *"I will press you for Indra, I will press you for Śakra*[291].
2. "My dear Indra[292]*, you who go from house to house inspecting them,*
drink what I have pressed with my teeth, (drink) with grain and curd, cakes and a song of praise.
3. "We wish to understand you, and still we do not want to speak out loud.
Slowly, even slower, drop by drop, you Drop, flow for Indra.
4. "Surely he will be able? surely will he be doing it? surely will he make us better?
Surely will we, who are hated by our husband, be united with Indra?
5. "These three places make sprout again, o Indra:
the head of my father, his field, and this part that is below my waist.
6. "That field, and this part of mine,
my father's head, make them all grow hair."
7. In the nave of the chariot, in the nave of a cart, in the nave of a yoke,
you of hundred powers have purified Apalā three times, o Indra, and given her sun-like skin.

As we see, the narrative begins with a short introduction by the poet-narrator and switches quickly, at the end of the first stanza, to a 1st person sg. monologue of a character-narrator who is identified as "a girl" (*kanyā*, an unmarried maiden). She has found a *soma* plant and she presses it — not with stones as in the proper ritual, but with her teeth — to prepare a sacrifice for Indra with the *soma* juice and other usual substances (stanzas 1-2). In the stanzas 3-4 she tells, in a distorted fashion and using the 1st person plural instead of the 1st person singular (perhaps being too coy to tell straight what happens): it seems that Indra wants to sleep with her.

After initial hesitation she agrees, ostensibly because her (future) husband hates her (or this is what he fears)[293] and she wants to change things with the help of the god.[294] In the stanzas 5-6 she speaks again clearly and in the 1st person sg., stating what she wants in return: that her father will become young and virile again (so that he will have hair on his head), her father's fields will become fertile again, and she herself will become like a woman (her nether parts will grow hair). Then the monologue ends, and the poet-narrator

[291] Śakra ("The able one") is another name for Indra.
[292] The word is *vīraka*, a diminutive form of *vīra*, "man" or "hero", a word that also refers to Indra.
[293] Some scholars (Jamison 1991: 170; Patton 1996: 308 n. 5) are of the opinion that the word *pati-dviṣaḥ* means she is the one who hates her husband (or her husband-to-be). This is not very logical, considering her wish to become more agreeable. Both "a husband-hater" and "hated by her husband" are grammatically possible.
[294] The sexual "healing" of Apalā by Indra has a later parallel in the *Mahābhārata* 1.7.113-115 where Kuntī and Madrī invite with a spell various gods to be the fathers for their sons, as their husband Paṇḍu cannot impregnate them.

steps in again and gives the last stanza (7) the girl's name and tells that Indra has made her pure and "sun-skinned". The charm with the naves of the wheels of vehicles with which Indra purifies Apalā has been explained in various ways.[295]

The commentator Yāska[296] was of the opinion that this hymn is an *itihāsa*, a "historical" story, but Sāyana[297] who was writing much later thought it was simply a hymn addressed to Indra.[298] Other commentators more or less follow the interpretation I have given above.[299] I firmly believe that Yāska is right: even though the text could have been used a charm to attain womanhood or cure a skin disease (acne, psoriasis or alopecia?), it reads as a narrative. It is also a framed narrative, although the frame provided by the primary narrator is minimal. The narrator-poet introduces "the girl" and tells that she found a *soma* plant on her way to water. The rest of the story is narrated by the voice of the girl, who tells of her meeting and talking with Indra, both by quoting her words and her thoughts (which hide more than reveal!). In the end the poet-narrator gives the charm that also contains the rest of the narrative: the girl was cured of a skin disease and her name was Apalā.

The two sections of the frame and the embedded narrative may well all have a different origin, because the name of the girl is mentioned only in the end, the bad skin is not present in the embedded narrative, and the missing pubic hair is ignored by the frame. There is also an interesting tension between the primary narrator of the frame who uses

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[295] The commentaries say that she has been having an illness that made her skin look bad (and lose her body hair), and this is the reason for her being hateful to suitors. According to Gonda (1975: 145) the rite mentioned at the end was a popular magic rite in which water was sprinkled through the naves of the three types of vehicles. It survives in the rite where water is sprinkled on the bride in the wedding. In the version of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* Apalā was herself (supposedly after having been made temporarily small enough) drawn through the three naves and sloughed her skin three times: the first skin became a hedgehog, the second an alligator, the third a chameleon.

[296] See p. 55 n. 251.

[297] Sāyana was the most famous of the Vedic commentators. His *bhāṣya* (commentary) was written in the 14th century in the kingdom of Vijayanagara.

[298] Gonda 1975: 145.

[299] The hymn has been commented upon e.g. by H.-P. Schmidt (1987), Jamison (1991) and Söhnen-Thieme (1996). Schmidt cites and discusses also older studies. According to him Apalā is approaching puberty and plagued by acne and sense of immaturity (she has no pubic hair). She makes an offer to Indra, who has an intercourse with her and both by this and by a special ritual makes her a marrigeable woman (fertile and beautiful to look at). He and Jamison pay attention to the ritual Apalā uses (an orthodox early-morning soma pressing wich appropriate verses familiar from other Vedic hymns) and the connection of the tale of Apalā and that of the lizard-skinned girl Akūpārā in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*. Jamison connects Apalā also to the myth of Svarbhānu who pierced the sun with darkness: "the blemishes on the sun's skin" were then healed by the gods. Söhnen-Thieme sees the voice of Apalā being manipulated in the hymn by an old priest (maybe her father Atri) who wants that Indra makes him young and virile again (make his head grow hair). She also pays attention to the different layers of the story that are present in the hymn (the girl wishing for pubic hair, the woman wishing to be agreeable to her husband, the "father-figure" wishing to be young again by offering the girl to Indra.)

few words and talks straight, and the narrator-character of the embedded narrative who meanders back and forth and speaks in an oblique way.

Similar in many ways is a longer hymn about a woman called Ghoṣā (X.40.). It is attributed to him, as is the one preceding it (X.39).[300] Both look like composite hymns. They are directed to the Aśvins.[301] The hymn X.39 contains a frame (stanzas 1-3 and 12-14) which evokes the gods with usual formulas, and another frame, which lists their good deeds and beneficiants (stanzas 4-5 and 7-11). In the middle of these there a non-formulaic, emotionally coloured stanza (6). It is spoken by an anomymous woman in the first person. "It is I who invoked you; hear me, o Aśvins. Like parents for ther son, do your best for me. I am without friends, without kin, without blood relatives, and heedless: rescue me in the face of this shame."[302] The desperate plea differs markedly from its well-ordered context.

The hymn X.40. has a longer monologue by a woman whose name, Ghoṣā, is given. It is framed by an invocation and a charm. The hymn begins (stanzas 1-3; or 1-2, see below) and ends (stanza 14) with an invocation to the Aśvins, whom the protagonist approaches with her wishes. These stanzas ask a chain of questions and like the stanzas 1-3 and 12-14 in the hymn V.39., could belong to any hymn to Aśvins. These form the outer frame: it is in normal script and marked as the layer I. There is another frame inside this (marked as the layer II and printed in italics), formed by a different type of poem that addresses the Aśvins. The tone is more personal, but the wishes stay in a general level. These verses also resemble formally each other. The verse 3, however, could belong to either frame.

Inside this second frame is the embedded narrative (layer III, bold italics), the speech of Ghoṣā. It is said that she is the daughter of a king[303]: she is unmarried and asks the Aśvins to give her a husband. The sentence that introduces her belongs to the narrator of the second frame. As in the previous hymn, the female narrator-character tells in a circuitous and obscure way about her situation, first praising the Aśvins by description

[300] The poet is said to be Ghoṣā Kakṣivatī. Kakṣivat is a seer and the mythical author of several hymns, which have affinities with X.39 and X.40. This attribution has influenced later versions (see chapter 3.5.3.). Here, as in the Apalā hymn, it is clear that the attribution is based on the content of the hymn(s). The name of Ghoṣā is mentioned in X.40 and the two hymns are similar to the hymns attributed to Kakṣivat, hence the name of the poet (Ghoṣā, the daughter of Kakṣivat). In the hymn itself (as probably in the narrative from which the section may be taken) Ghoṣā is simply a princess who wants to have a husband.

[301] For the Aśvins see n. 225 above.

[302] Translation by Jamison and Brereton.

[303] Thus she cannot be the forlorn speaker in the X.39.

and simile (6) and then referring to mythical persons they have helped (7-8, these stanzas give a string of clues, like windows, to various mythical narratives), and finally giving a sensual description of courting and marriage (9-11) which she envisions for herself.

Her words do not make a very coherent story, but the sequence that tells of her praying for a husband (5-11) is nevertheless a narrative with two frames around it. The poem is hard to analyse — it can be read also as an example of the obscure diction of the poems — and so the boundaries given below are tentative. The first *tṛca* stands clearly out, but the rest of the poem lacks the symmetry of the *omphalos* hymns. Many commentators restrict the speech of Ghoṣā to the verses 5-6. Jamison (2015: 1442) ends it in the verse 8, and gives the rest to the narrator-poet. However, she makes a difference between the sequence 9-11 with its intimate description of marriage, and the verses 12-14, which are of general nature. This interpretation would also require two outer frames for the monologue of Ghoṣā.

I
1. Where goes your shining chariot, o you two Men,
and who has adorned it for the prosperous journey,
arriving glorious at dawn and going from house to house,
morning after morning, brought by thought and caring?
2. Where are the Aśvins in the evening, where in the morning,
where do they stop for supper and where do they spend their night?
Who will invite you when a widow[304] goes to bed with her husband's brother,
when a girl brings a handsome groom into a room?
3. Early in the morning you awaken praised like an old couple,
and every dawn, worthy of sacrifice, you will arrive to the house.
Whom do you ever leave at loss, O Heroes,
and to whose *soma* offering you will come like two sons of kings?[305]

II
4. Like hunters who track wild elephants we summon you
with our oblation at dawn and at dusk.
The man who offers the oblation at the right time,
you will nourish, you Heroes, you fair pair of husbands.

III
5. Walking round you, Aśvins, came Ghoṣā, the daughter of a king,

[304] This is a reference to levirate, which could be practiced if the husband was dead or impotent and the family wanted still progeny.
[305] According to Jamison (2014: 1441-1442) this means that Ghoṣā invites the Aśvins like princes to her *svayaṃvara* (see next note). But this idea is not present in the actual speech of Ghoṣā (5-11) where she only wants them to give her a husband. It is true that in later versions of this narrative (see p. 293) the Aśvins become the lovers of Ghoṣā, but here it would be more logical to put "the sons of king" and "fair pair of husbands" to the mouth of the narrator-poet. These phrases are are not used in other hymns, but as they are here present only in the introduction, it could confirm that they come from another source than the embedding.

*and said**: "I ask you, you two,***
will you stay by me by day and by night, and bestow me with power,
like a race-horse [that wins the prize] of horses and chariots.[306]
6. "You, wise Aśvins, move around with your chariot
driving it like Kutsa[307] ***to the clan of the singers of praise.***
Around you go the bees that bring honey in their mouth,
like a woman that [keeps] her love [behind her lips].
7. "You came to help Bhujyu[308]***, you came to Vaśa***[309]***,***
you came to Siñjara[310] ***and Uṣanas***[311]***.***
A stingy man passes by your friendship:
but when I ask for a favour, with gratitude, you will help me.
8. "You Aśvins rescue Kṛśa[312] ***and Śayu***[313]***,***
you rescue the worshipper and the widow.
You Aśvins throw open with the voice of thunder the cow-pen
with its seven mouths to give rewards.
9. "She has became a young woman;
the little man[314] ***runs away from her.***
Plants by your magical power have blossomed,
they burst to him as rivers into the valley, [she] to him,[315] ***this day of marriage!***
10. "They mourn the living, they both find joy (?) in sacrifice.
Men have thought this over for a long time.[316]
It is a blessing for the fathers who have connected [the couple]:
the husbands will rejoice when embracing their wives.
11. "We do not understand this, so please explain it to us,
how a young man will stay in peace in the lap of young woman.
Let us go to the house of a bull of bursting seed
who loves a red cow. This we wish, o Aśvins. "

II

12. You grant us your favour, o Aśvins, rich in mares.
What is desired is rooted deep in the hearts.
You fair pair of husbands will protect us,
let us go to the home of rich suitor[317] *and be loved.*
13. Give wealth and strong sons to one who is eloquent,
as you rejoice in his house.

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306 The words of the speaker may indicate that she is about to have a *svayaṃvara* ("choosing- herself"), in which noble young men are invited to the court so that the princess can choose between them. In some cases there is a martial contest. This practice is described in old narratives like the two epics, but there is no evidence of its use in real life.
307 Kutsa was a divine king and the charioteer of the god Indra.
308 Bhujyu was drowning in an ocean and the Aśvins rescued him. He is mentioned in also in RV I.116.3.
309 Another man rescued by the Aśvins, mentioned also in RV I.116.21.
310 Siñjara was impotent and the Aśvins cured him. According to Sāyana he is the same man as Atri (V.78.4 above, also I.116.8).
311 Uṣanas was a priest who was rescued by the Aśvins.
312 A Vedic sage rescued by the Aśvins.
313 A man rescued by the Aśvins. Mentioned also in RV I.116.22.
314 This is not very clear. "The little man" (*kanīnaka-*) here may be translated as "a young man" or taken as a reference to a penis, or something else.
315 This may refer to the consummation of the marriage: the imagery is accurate but it is used in a circumspect way.
316 I.e. the marriage ceremony is based on a long tradition.
317 Jamison (2014: 1444) translates this as "Aryaman": this is a shady god that has no other characteristics than being "a comrade" or "a groom" of some other god.

Fair pair of husbands, make a ford where one can drink well:
take away the hateful block that stands in our path.

I
14. Where and in whose houses will they rejoice today,
the marvellous Aśvins, a fair pair of husbands?
Who stops them? Into the house of what inspired priest
or sacrificer they might have gone?

To make a few further notes about the boundaries: the stanzas 12 and 13 are usually given to Ghoṣā, but her speech could end already with the stanza 11, where the lush description of the marriage ends, and the following stanzas would belong to the narrator like the stanza 4. Stanzas 12-13 contain more general wishes that the previous stanzas, and they all give the Aśvins the epithet "a fair pair of husbands" (*śubhaspatī*, also present in the last stanza). In addition the stanzas 12-13 provide the charm, which is in hymns like this always spoken be the narrator after the analoguous legend is told (the last stanza here, however, is not a charm).

Even if the boundaries can be drawn in different places, it is evident that the structure of this hymn is A-B-C-B-A, here I-II-III-II-I, where "primary-narrator-frame" is marked as I, "secondary-narrator-frame" marked as II and the embedded monologue of the narrator-character as III.

The examples show that the framing of narratives by other narratives/texts was a technique that was known by the Vedic poets. The common three-part structure used in a group of Ṛgvedic hymns, like the Indra and Vṛtra hymn above, gave one opportunity to this: the middle part could be utilized to make a reference to a myth or a legend. This developed into the *omphalos* structure with layers gathered around an emotional/mystical core. Behind the *omphalos* loomed “the ring composition”, inherited by the Vedic people from the Indo-European past. In the "legend-spells", hymns containing a charm, a legend that was taken from the floating material of oral narratives was put between a narrator's introduction and a charm. This text could be further framed by invocation and recapitulation, like in the X.40.

In the monologue poems the speech of the character in the core contain the narrative, so it is logical to define this section as an embedding. In these poems the change of narrator is visible when the speech of a character is quoted.

Moreover, the proud self-consciousness of the poet-narrators, seen in their easy manipulation of words, formulas and compositions, brings the element of metanarration in the Indian literature from the very beginning. Without doubt the poets are aware that

their poems will be used in the most sacred religious ceremonies to evoke gods for the benefit of their society. But they also make clear the poem is a precious gift which should compensated with the grace and gifts from the god-narratee (and from the patron of the sacrifice).

This assurance is voiced in the end of the poem. E.g. the stanza 14 the hymn to the Aśvins, referred to above (X.39.): "We have made this song of praise for you, o Aśvins! We have fashioned it like Bhṛgu fashioned his chariot. We have drawn it near to our heart like a young beau clasps his maiden, like our own dear son who continues our line." And in a hymn to the goddess Night (X.128.8): "To you I have driven (this poem) like a cow (to her pen): choose it, o Daughter of Heaven, o Night, like a song that is sung for a victor!" Here the poet-narrators express their pride and assurance about their creation. They know what their composition is worth and do not hesitate to advertise it.

The preciousness of the poems was recognized also by their preservers and transmitters. By time they became *mantras*, "parcels of mystic power", which brought spiritual and material benefit for those who prayed with them. They became also eminently quotable, and this development is seen in the *Brāhmaṇas*. The Ṛgvedic verses that were quoted inside a narrative connected the present text to the past text which transmitted its authority, holiness and preciousness to the frame.

As shown by the examples, in the *Ṛgveda* the embedded texts are usually not complete narratives, but fragments or allusions that refer to the full narratives known to the audience. The structure of the poems can be ambigious: because of the varied use of pronouns, obscure language and the mixing of the personal and general in the narratives the analysis is often only tentative. The collection has no overall frame, but each hymn is independent and self-contained, even though they build together a mythology and a landscape of the Vedic world.[318] The idea of framing is not used consistently, and the boundaries of the frame and the embedding are not always clearly indicated. Because of these facts I use the word *proto-framing* when speaking about the *Ṛgveda*. But it must be kept in mind that hymns like VIII.91 and X.40 qualify as frame narratives, as there are

[318] The arrangement of the *Ṛgveda* to books and groups of families of poets has been compared to the frame narratives (see Witzel 1987: 413 n. 71). This comparison does not work. The collection comprises of ten books, and the books comprise of hymns, but all this concerns the external organization of the material and belongs thus to the level of the "historical author" and the "literary work". There are no prologues or epilogues in the *Ṛgveda* or any of its books to form a literary frame. In addition, organizing the material by grouping similar things under a general title is is an universal way of arranging anything. It is not similar operation to the framing devices in literary texts.

definitely two (or three) narrative levels with different narrators, because the "quotation" contains a narrative and can be analysed as an embedding.

In addition, the composition of those hymns that use pre-existent material for the frame and/or a popular narrative motif for the embedding, makes it possible to claim that the practice of combining different texts or different types of texts (especially inserting a mythical or legendary tale inside a ritualistic or supplicatory text) was "invented"[319] quite early in the Vedic age, and when pondering, analysing and commenting Ṛgvedic texts the creators of the *Brāhmaṇas* became familiar with this habit.

2.2.2. The saṃvāda hymns and the ākhyāna theory

In addition to monologues, a group of Vedic hymns contain dialogues.[320] These were noted by early Indian commentators, who called them *saṃvādas* ("conversations"). Consequently they were not given ritual applications in the commentaries but were defined as "stories" (*itihāsa*). Scholars have debated about their nature and the reason of their presence in the Vedic corpus. In the form they have survived they look like short dramas. But they tell a story, or a part of a story, by a dialogue of two or more characters. In the same way as in the monologues the quoted speech in the dialogue hymns can be defined to be a narrative. This interpretation is backed by the opinion of the early commentators and also by the afterlife of these hymns. They form a particular group of narrative material that was recycled, modified and elaborated in later narratives.

The dialogue form as such is interesting. There is a continuation of the mode of "conversational narrative" from these early *saṃvādas* to the dialogues in the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*, and further on, to the dialogic frame structures of the two epics and the Classical story cycles.[321] I will return to this question in the chapter 2.6. when I discuss

[319] When a structural feature appears in this way in the earliest known literature, being first shown as an use of "a grid" into which more or less pre-existing forms, subjects, tones and narratives are fitted, and a tendency to refer to (older?) narratives known to the audience with suitable fragments of the whole, it does not seems appropriate to talk about invention. A better word is evolvement (see chapter 2.6. below). The poems were composed by individuals but they used models that were generally accepted and adopted, and born some time before the fixation of the hymns. Exactly when and where, that we cannot know.

[320] Fifteen hymns are totally in the form of a dialogue and twelve contain short conversations. See Gonda 1975: 199-204.

[321] The essays in Black and Patton (2015) trace this development.

the narrative situation in the *Brāhmaṇas*, and again in the chapters 3.6. and 4. But on the other hand, dialogues cannot be as easily analysed as frame narratives as the monologues: in many of them it is dubious whether the voice of narrator is heard. Some stanzas look like a commentary, but they still can be part of the speech of a character, because it is typical for the characters to use devious and circumspect language and use the 3rd person of themselves. Only if the poem contains a final recapitulation or a charm, it can be said to possess a frame. In this case the first part of the frame is usually missing, because it is typical for the dialogues to start in the middle of the conversation, without any introduction.[322]

I will begin with the hymn X.95. because it illustrates perfectly the fashion in which "the drama" is presented, and also because the narrative of the human king Purūravas and the divine nymph (*apsaras*) Urvaśī has been retold later many times. It is a conversation between two persons, the names of which are mentioned in the speech. The dialogue begins *in medias res* and appears to take place at the end of a liaison. The woman is leaving the man and the man is trying to stop her. She does not want to listen. The dialogue is quite difficult to interpret, and every attempt seems to be bound to go wrong somewhere, because the form and the language are so ambiguous.[323]

Here are the first five stanzas. The general drive and the direction of the narrative are clear, but the details are not. Distribution of the stanzas between the speakers is blurred because of the vagueness of the text and incoherent use of pronouns: only some verses reveal the identity or the sex of the speaker.[324] It is clear that the stanza 1 is spoken by the man and the stanzas 2 and 5 by the woman. The stanzas 3 and 4 is usually given to the man, but they may also be spoken by the narrator. The italics and the normal style mark again the difference between embedding and the frame of the narrator. This ambiguity in division of the narrative voices has already been seen in the hymns VIII.86, V.78. and X.40. The stanza 12, on the other hand, contains both a personal and an impersonal voice.

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[322] The frame need not be closed: it may lack the part before the embedding or the part at the end. See the chapters 3.5.1. p. 286-287 and 3.7. p. 315-316.

[323] See Bodewitz 2010, which discusses almost all that is problematic in this poem. His criticism of other interpretations is for the most part justified, but I am not totally convinced of his own reading. See also Goldman 1969.

[324] O'Flaherty, in notes to her translation (1984: 255) says that the third person is used here by the man because he refers to something that happened a "long time ago". I believe that this historicity would mark the speaker as a narrator. O'Flaherty's interpretation is based on the wish to see this hymn as a continuous dialogue without an interruption by an external narrator. But it may also be discontinuous, as the material that reminds the audience of the details of the myth would fit well into the mouth of the narrator.

This kind of vacillation that blurs the boundary between the narrator and the narrated is a constant feature of the Vedic corpus, and it is interesting to note that it is present also in the dialogue hymns. It can interpreted in various ways, but I think that the possibility of a wider use of a composite structure in the Ṛgvedic corpus has not yet been sufficiently considered. In the dialogue hymns there can be traces of a narratorial commentary that has accompanied the voices of the speakers. So I have suggested in the translations that the verses that seem to look at the drama from outside could be given to the narrator.

(1) (The man:) *Hark, my wife! [Be] thoughful [and] halt, you cruel woman,*
so that we can talk together.
There must not be such thoughts that, left unspoken,
they will not bring us comfort, even in the distant days.

(2) (The woman:) *What use I have with such words of yours?*
I have gone away from you, like the first of the dawns.
Return to your home, Purūravas:
I am hard to catch, like the wind.

(3) (The man / the narrator:)... or like a matchless arrow shot from a quiver,
like a race in which cattle is won, in which hundreds are won.
It was not the idea that there was no man there, when the lightning struck,
and the musicians[325] could bleat like lambs in distress.[326]

(4) (The man / the narrator:) She gave her husband's father best nourishment,
from her dwelling she came when her lover desired her;
and she found pleasure in him,
as he day and night pierced her with his rod.

(5) (The woman:) *Three times a day you did pierce your wife with your rod,*
even when she did not want it.
I followed your desire, Purūravas;
you were the king of my body, o Hero.[327]

[325] The word is usually interpreted to mean the *gandharvas* who were celestial musicians and partners of the *apsarases*.
[326] Jamison translates the second part of the stanza (*avīre kratau vi davidyutan norā na māyuṃ citayanta dhunayaḥ)* in a different way than almost all the others, namely: "like a lamb its bleating, so are her tumultuous (tempests) displayed." (2014: 1549). This is brave but not very convincing: after a magnificent metaphor of Urvaśī as the winning arrow in a game of shooting to the mark and the winning horse in a race, it would be lame (or insulting) to compare her shows of temper to the bleating of a lamb. On the other hand, Urvaśī is compared to a lightning in stanza 10, so *davidyutan* (3 pers. plural subjunctive of the intensive form of *viduyt-* "strike a lightning") could refer to her tantrums and *dhunayaḥ* could describe them (Nom. pl. from *dhuni-* "making noise, making sound"). But what can be done with the "state without a man" (*avīra-*) and bleating sheep which undoubtedly are there?
[327] My translation.

It is evident that the composer of the hymn expects his audience to know the story of the two lovers. Without clarification the second part of the third stanza, as it is usually translated, does not make sense. It may refer to the formal reason for the separation of the couple, if one believes the explanation of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (X.5.1-17).[328] However, it is probable that the composers of the later narrative had no idea of the meaning of the obscure parts of the text. [329] Either they were familiar with another, a more recent version of the story, or they invented new details to increase the narrativity of the story. Maybe both.[330]

The fifth stanza of the hymn reveals that the breach of promise (if there was any) is not the only reason for the separation. Urvaśī complains, with ironic repetition,[331] that the man made love to her also when she was not willing. This accusation is reiterated in the stanza 11.

(11) (The woman:) *You were born here, Purūravas, to give protection,*
but you turned your force against me.
I warned you on that very day, because I knew, but you would not listen.
Why do you want to talk to me when it is useless?

Purūravas does not try to deny the accusation of violence and coercion. He changes the subject. In the next stanza he starts to talk about the possibility of a son be born, without knowing his father. In this stanza the personal ("this son be born *to me*") and impersonal narration ("when he (the son) learns of *him* (his father)") are mixed, and the second half of the stanza makes a general point against the divorce of a married couple.

(12) (The man:) *When will this son that is born to me seek his father?*
He will weep in a pitiful voice[332] *when he learns of him.*
(The narrator?:) Who will separate a man and a wife who are of one mind,

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[328] The brāhmaṇic version is given in the next chapter. I give here a short summary. Purūravas had promised that she will never see him naked (a condition that brings to mind the condition that the god Eros presents to the mortal woman Psyche when they marry). The *gandharvas* were jealous of Urvaśī and planned a ruse to have her back by making Purūravas break his promise. If all this was indeed part of the old story, the bleating and the lightning would refer to this ruse. The *brāhmaṇa* tells that when she then saw him naked, she disappeared, but appeared to him later in the form of a goose, and the Vedic conversation of the hymn takes place by a lake where she and her companions swim as birds.
[329] Jamison thinks that they have misinterpreted the Vedic stanza (2014: 1549).
[330] This is a recurring problem: see Witzel 1987: 386 n. 20.
[331] When reading an old text, it is difficult to know whether something that sounds to us sarcastic or ambigious is really meant to be like that. Irony was not unknown to Vedic poets. In this dialogue the passionate (and overblown) bursts of emotion of the man are contrasted with the cool and measured speech of a woman, so it strongly invites one to interpret the repetition as ironical.
[332] Or: "shed a tear big as wheel".

when the fire burns in the husband's house?[333]

In the next stanza (13) Urvaśī seems to promise to send the son when he starts to weep (i.e. long for his father), again repeating his words to him. But she herself will not return, so he should go home. Now a suicide is mentioned (14), using again the third person: this is most probably Purūravas himself, at least in the first half-stanza . The woman says that he must not think of dying for a woman, for women are no friends to men (15). The second part of the stanza, as that of the stanza 12, gives a common truth that sounds like a proverb. It is strange that a woman who has a grievance against a man, as Urvaśī clearly does, would quote a misogynous saying about women having hearts of a jackal, an animal which is a scavenger and an object of spite and loathing. The woman could again be ironic, giving a typical male opinion of women that dare to leave them, but this may also be a commenting voice from outside the dialogue.[334]

(14) (The man.) *Your lover shall vanish today to never return,*
going as far as the farthest distance.
(The man/ the narrator?:) He will lie in the bosom of the Destruction,
and wild wolves will tear him there.

(15) (The woman:) *No, do not die, Purūravas, do not vanish,*
do not let the malevolent wolves devour you.
(The woman/ the narrator?:) With women there is no friendship,
they have the hearts of jackals.

Purūravas expresses his grief once again, as he sees that his wife has already disappeared. In the last stanza (18) the narrator appears and gives a message from the gods.[335]

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[333] The burning fire in the husband's house refers to the fact that his parents are still alive and the separation will be a shame and a burden to them.

[334] Most readers of this hymn seem to think that Urvaśī treats Purūravas badly. Surprisingly Jamison in her introduction to this hymn (2014:1548-1549) is even more censorious than others. She calls her a "hard-hearted female [...] anxious to return to her carefree life with her fellow Apsarases, and happy enough to abandon her child in order to get free". This view forgets many things. Stanzas 8 and 9 bring forth the dichotomy of human vs. divine, perhaps to remind that these two live in different worlds and their unions do not last. And this particular union sounds fragile anyway. Naturally the man has been content piercing his wife with his rod day and night, even when she did not want it, and being the king of her body, while she submitted to him, but this was not what she wanted, or what any sensible and spirited woman would want if there was an alternative. Purūravas paints a pretty picture of their life together, but is it true? Even Jamison admits that he is an emotional blackmailer. As to their child, it is natural in a patriarchal world that the boy shall belong to his father when he is old enough. And how could he have made the precious sacrifices to get his father to heaven (stanza 18), if he would have stayed with her mother?

[335] Those who do not allow any other voices for this hymns except the two lovers give this stanza to Urvaśī.

(18) (The narrator:) The gods want to say this to you, son of Iḷā[336]:
'Because you are wedded to Death,
your sons will sacrifice with their oblation to the gods,
and you shall rejoice in heaven.'

The ending of this earliest version of the legend seems bleak for Purūravas: you will die, your fate cannot be altered, and it is not certain if you ever see your wife again. But if the last stanza is a charm, it is not addressed to Purūravas (or if it is, he is presented as an Everyman), but to other mortal men for their consolation. They all will die but they will enjoy happiness in heaven because their sons sacrifice to the gods to make this possible. The frame-narrator who gives the charm may be or may not to be the same as that narrator that hovers with his comments behind the dialogue of the characters. This depends on way the stanzas are divided among speakers, and this operation, as mentioned above, is difficult. The 3rd person narration does not necessarily indicate an external narrator, as was seen in the cores of the *omphalos* hymns above. On the other hand, the 3rd person narrative here looks like a commentary. The *Brāhmaṇa* version changes the end of the story and also the purpose of the telling of it in the first place (see pp. 99-104).

The other *saṃvāda* hymns usually present a dialogue in the same way, so that the poem begins with it and in the middle of the story, without an introduction or an invocation. There seems to be minimal or no intervention by a clear-cut primary narrator, but as in the X.95, the protagonists can adopt an inpersonal narrative voice which rises to a level of a commenting narrator who does not express personal feelings of the characters but gives a general and traditional view on the situation. As said, it is not sure if this can be interpreted as the voice of the narrator: why should he intervene and break the flow and the symmetry of the dialogue? But perhaps there is another kind of symmetry, and this neutral voice is a part of the old prose commentary (see below).

The dialogue of Yama and Yamī (X.10.) lacks the concluding charm, but the voice of an impersonal narrator that pontificates and generalizes can be heard behind the stanzas 12, 14, 16 and 18 that are traditionally given to the male speaker. Yama and Yamī are twins (their name means "a twin") of a divine or semi-divine ancestry[337] and the first humans in the earth. In the beginning of the hymn the feminine twin Yamī wants to "have an intimate friendhip" with Yama to start the human race, as it has been ordained (1, 3,

[336] Iḷā/Iḍā is the mother of Purūravas.
[337] The fourth stanza in the hymn talks about this: their parents were "a gandharva and a maiden in the waters" (*gandharvo apsvapyā ca yoṣā*).

5). Yama declines: he is not willing (2) because incest has not been done before (4), Mitra and Varuṇa forbid the union (6) and the spies of the gods would see their misdemenour (8). During the dialogue which is delivered in a circumspect way (3rd persons and avoiding names) the logical reasons give away to emotion in the stanza 7: Yamī, when revealing their names, proclaims that she desires Yama and wants to have sex with him. Then Yama also resorts to human laws and customs, saying that the union of a brother and sister is not proper (10) and will be called evil (12). He also starts to repeat that Yamī should find another partner (8, 10, 12, 14), and when Yamī explodes in her final stanza (13) and calls Yama a "jerk"[338] (*batá*), she is jealous of other women. This is odd, because it is implied that they are alone on earth.[339]

It is not clear why Yama wins in the end. In the corresponding Avestan myth the siblings go ahead and become the ancestors of the human race, and Indian creation myths include many stories about primeval incest. This hymn presents a number of interesting problems.[340] It begins like a myth of two gods in the beginning of the creation, before they will unite to fill the world with life. Then they became step by step more and more human, haggling in the end like an old couple. The situation can be compared with that of the next example (I.179). X.10 could be a combination of two narratives, an older one, similar to the Avestan story, and a younger one which disapproves the incest.[341] So it also may be a proof of the habit of mixing texts from different sources.

In the short dialogue of Agastya and his wife Lopamudrā (I.179.) the woman is also persuading the man to have sex. Initially Agastya declines because he wants to go on with his ascesis, but the wife talks him over. In this hymn there is both a charm and an impersonal narrator's voice to be found (stanzas 2 and 4). The latter is attached to the female and mixed with her speech, so that the first half of the stanza 4 presents the speaking voice of the woman and the second half an impersonal narrator who tells what the woman does next.[342] The last two stanzas (5-6) talk about an expiation for the sexual

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[338] Jamison's translation (Jamison and Brereton 2014: 1382-1383).
[339] Behind this there may be the idea that it is exactly the act of sex that makes the first humans mortal, like Adam and Eve in the Biblical story.
[340] See Bodewitz 2009: 251-285. Bodewitz discusses this hymn in detail and analyses also other studies (including those of Schneider and Wurm) on it. He is of the opinion that Gonda's theory that the *saṃvāda* hymns were used as charms in the rituals has weaknesses and this hymn proves it, as it cannot be attached to any charm. This appears to be true, but the lack of ritual connection can be the result of the hymn having undergone considerable change before becoming fixed.
[341] The studies of Schneider (1968) and Wurm (1976) suggest that this may be the case.
[342] I.179.4: (The woman:) "I am overcome with desire for the roaring bull (or the swelling penis) which is restrained, I am overcome with desire from here, there, and everywhere." (The narrator:): "Lopāmudrā draws out the rampant bull of a man, the thoughtless woman sucks dry the steadfast seer."

act by drinking *soma* and affirm that Agastya was blessed with both ascetic power and progeny. These stanzas are traditionally ascribed to a student (*brahmacārin*) of Agastya that has witnessed the incident. Thieme, however, argues justly that this *brahmacārin* is not a character in the story, but the poet (in other words, the narrator that appeared also in the stanzas 2 and 4), and the stanzas 5-6 are a charm pronouncing a wish for expiation for sexual deeds and giving the happy outcome of this legend as an affirmative example.[343]

Like in the X.10, the dialogue is evenly and regularly divided between the speakers in a hymn which tells about Indra's female dog Saramā and the Paṇis (X.108).[344] The Paṇis are a foreign race that have stolen the cattle of the gods. Only the stanza 8, apart from the final charm, has an impersonal narrator voice.[345] More fluctuation can be seen in the hymn III.33.[346], in which the sage Viśvāmitra negotiates with the rivers of Vipās and Śutudrī who answer to him with female voices. The two rivers talk about themselves as "we" in the stanzas 4, 6, 8 and 10, and address the poet who in the context of the hymn is identified as the sage Viśvāmitra. The sage, however, speaks in the first person "I" only in the stanza 3. In the stanzas 5, 9, 11 and 12 he indicates his role by addressing the rivers with "you". In the stanza 2 the address is more general, so it may be given to a narrator, and the stanza 7 tells with an impersonal voice the myth of Indra slaying Vṛtra (*Ahi*, "the snake"). So, in addition to the concluding charm there may be at least two instances where an external narrator appears.[347]

The adding of the final charm seems to provide the reason, or a pretext, to include the *saṃvāda* hymns in the corpus. It is probable that those dialogues that were quoted belonged to some legend that the Vedic poets believed to be so ancient and venerable that it held a mystic power to work as a spell on humans. They too are composite hymns: the charm has another, older text attached before it. They have at least two levels, that of the fictional narrator, though this part is pushed back, and that of the narrator-characters. But we may also ask if there are two narrators instead of one, and two frames. The narrator

[343] Thieme 1963. The charm affirms that in combining the ascesis and procreation both spiritual and physical immortality is secured. See also Patton 2016 (1996).
[344] Saramā follows the Paṇis "to the end of the earth" where they have taken their loot. The Paṇis try to frighten her and then bribe her, but she will not yield. The charm affirms that the cattle is won back.
[345] As all the other stanzas show a regular pattern of dialogue, most translators and commentators have put also this stanza in the mouth of Saramā.
[346] A kind of a Indian Moses, Viśvāmitra persuades the rivers to flow low enough to let the clan of Bharatas to cross them. Afterwards he raises their waters high again.
[347] These hymns could also be analyzed in more detail, pinpointing the occasions where the change between "personal" and "impersonal" narratives implies a change of narrator, but as their ambiguity is similar to that in the X.95. above, I do not go any deeper into them in this study.

that pronounces the charm is has more distance to the events than the narrator that describes, comments and interprets the action as an onlooker.

Where do the stories of the *saṃvāda* hymns come from? Both Jan Gonda and Ludwig Alsdorf[348] give a short history of different explanations for their origin. They have been interpreted as pieces of old dramas, either Vedic mystery plays (by Leopold von Schröder in 1907) or ancestors of the secular drama of classical age (by Johannes Hertel in 1904).[349] Karl Geldner suggested in 1917 that they could be the oldest ballads in world literature. Some have been of the opinion that they have no prehistory and they represent nothing but themselves.

The oldest hypothesis is *the ākhyāna*[350] *theory* proposed by Hermann Oldenberg in 1882[351]. According to Oldenberg the *saṃvāda* hymns represent an old "*ākhyāna*" genre, which mixes narrative prose with the dialogue of the protagonists in places of heightened emotions or high dramatic points in the plot. The verse part could be cryptic and hard to understand by itself when not accompanied by a prose narrative which contained the plot. The verses were fixed and memorized. The prose, on the other hand, did not survive, because it was improvised by each performer on the basis of the story that was commonly known.

Some other scholars adopted the theory and developed it further. Pischel (and also Geldner, before he invented the ballad theory) was of the opinion that the stanzas had been cut out from complete stories, which had been collected in a prose corpus. This corpus would also have served as the source of the later commentators and compilers of such works as the *Bṛhaddevatā* and the *Mahābharata*.[352] But the existence of the corpus could not be firmly proved, as nothing of it or even any reference to it has survived, whereas *Brāhmaṇas* have been scrupulously preserved. Because of this the *ākhyāna* theory fell out of favour in the late 1920s, and with it the discussion about the *saṃvāda* hymns died out.

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[348] Gonda 1975: 206-210; Alsdorf 1974: 36-48.

[349] There is no evidence of dramatic elements in Vedic rituals. The *saṃvādas* could be analysed as ballads, but the question remains why this genre did not have any continuity after the Ṛgvedic hymns. The epic poetry of the pre-classical age is markedly different.

[350] *Ākhyāna* means "a story" or "a narrative". In Indian texts this word refers usually not to a genre but a specific narrative text. It is connected mostly to the classical story collections like the *Pañcatantra*. Also the *Mahābhārata* calls itself an *ākhyāna*. The words for the "narrative (genre)" are *itihāsa* and *kathā*. The literary terminology of the old Indian texts and theorists is touched here only superficially. See Sieg 1902: 17-36.

[351] The idea was first introduced by Windisch in 1879, but Oldenberg developed it further and used consistently the term of *ākhyāna* when describing the old genre.

[352] Gonda 1975: 207.

The question about the prehistory of the *saṃvāda* hymns came into surface again in the 1960s, when Oldenberg's theory was vindicated by Ludwig Alsdorf. Alsdorf saw that evidence for Oldenberg's claim was provided by the Buddhist *Jātakas*, which had been preserved exactly like the hypothetical *ākhyānas*.[353] It is very probable that the *gāthās* (stanzas) were originally recited with an improvised prose narrative that provided the story behind them.[354] As only the verses were canonical and fixed, they survived, but the prose portion did not, being variable and dependent of each performer. For this reason the present *Jātaka* text is a composite, consisting of the old part, the verses that were composed in the same period as the earlier parts of the *Mahābharata* (4th - 2nd centuries BCE), and the later prose narrative / commentary, that became fixed only in the 5th century CE in Sri Lanka. Alsdorf points out that there is a great difference between these two parts: the *gāthās* are mostly secular in nature, whereas the prose narratives (and the frame story) have a Buddhist message.[355]

Alsdorf thought that the *Uttarajjhāyā* was also a proof for the *ākhyāna* theory This is one of the oldest texts of the Jain Śvetāmbara canon. It is composed of different layers. The old narrative verses that look much like the Vedic *saṃvāda* stanzas, have been later complemented with introductions and explanatory verses in a different metre.[356] Here is again an older, fixed verse version, that only much later acquires an explanatory part: the idea is that the performer, who knows the story, improvises the narrative part during the recitations of the text, and the fixing of a narrative part takes place only after the story (or its earlier version) has ceased to be common knowledge. As regards the lost prose corpus of narratives envisioned by Pischel, it may well be that there was something like it. It is only probable that most of it would disappear. It was never sacred (and thus central) like the verse fragments of the hymns, or the *Brāhmaṇa* stories, but profane (and thus auxiliary). Therefore it was not committed to memory by the usual technical methods of the preservers of the sacred tradition.

The *ākhyāna* theory is relevant to the discussion of the history of the frame story in several ways. It reminds us that there are various layers in the oldest literature that has survived to us, and that in India it was usual to attach popular narrative texts to sacred texts in an early phase of history. We shall see more of this in next chapters. It also gives

[353] See the chapter 3.5.2. below.
[354] Alsdorf 1974 (1963/1964): 36-48.
[355] Alsdorf 1974: 42-44.
[356] Alsdorf 1974: 45-46.

evidence to the persistence of the *miśra* genre, which mixes verse and prose, typical of such later iconic narrative texts as the *Pañcatantra*. It will be met soon enough in the *brāhmaṇic* narrative of the Śunaḥśepa in which prose narrative is interrupted by *gāthās* and verses from *Ṛgveda*. Finally, the *ākhyāna* theory lays bare the mechanisms of the composition of much of the older literature and throws light to the processes that dictated which part of the narrative tradition survived and which did not.

2.3. The narratives of the Brāhmaṇas

The *Brāhmaṇas* are lengthy Vedic texts[357] that explain and comment on the Vedic ritual ceremonies, most of all the public sacrifices described in the class of the *sūtra*[358] texts which also belong to the Vedic corpus (*śrautasūtras*)[359]. According to Jan Gonda, these explanations have been collated from "the floating mass of views and discourses"[360] between the 10th and the 7th centuries BCE, if the conventional chronology is accepted.[361]

The *Brāhmaṇas* try to establish connections between the Vedic ritual and the cosmic order. This is achieved by creating a system of causal and symbolic network which rationalizes the details of ritual acts. The audience of these texts was the priestly class, as they presupposed the knowledge of the particularities of the rituals. Historically, the *Brāhmaṇas* represent a period during which the simple offerings and the god-fearing world-view of the earlier Vedic religion was giving way to complicated rituals and esoteric lore that were the monopoly of the priests, who as the managers of the all-important rites were even mightier than the deities.

In earlier times Western scholars found the *Brāhmaṇas* unattractive, even to the point that they were called "the twaddle of idiots and the raving of madmen".[362] More accurate would be to say that they were composed for specialists, and therefore they read in many parts like technical manuals. In spite of this, it is evident that they are important

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[357] For the classification of the Vedic texts see p. 54 n. 245.
[358] *Sūtra* refers to a text that consists of short aphoristic formulas.
[359] The word *śrauta* comes from *śruti* ("that which is heard") a definition referring to the sacred tradition of the Veda, but in the class of the *śrautasūtra* the reference is to the big and important public rituals.
[360] Gonda 1975: 339.
[361] For a short explanation of the chronology of the Veda, see Gonda 1975: 20-23 and of the schools, the same: 26-32.
[362] The opinion of Max Müller (1823-1900), quoted in O'Flaherty 1985: 5.

not only for scholars of religion and speculative thought in India. The stories that are framed by exegesis are among first complete examples of narrative literature in India,[363] and they are quite intelligible for the general reader. In addition, the structure of the "technical sections" reveals facts that support the hypotheses that are central in this study.

The narratives were present already in the oldest *Brāhmaṇas*, but the longest and most elaborate stories are to be found in the younger ones, *Jaiminīya* and *Śatapatha*. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* has only one narrative worth of mention, but it is remarkable indeed: the Śunaḥśepa legend. *Aitareya* is one of the two *Brāhmaṇas* attached to the *Ṛgveda*. It has forty chapters divided between eight books or "fifths" (*pañcika*). The books I-VI, which deal with the *soma* sacrifice[364], are older than the books VII and VIII[365], the subjects of which are the animal sacrifice, various expiations and the royal consecration (*rājasūya*). The story of Śunaḥśepa is embedded in the description and explanation of the *rājasūya* in the book VII. This narrative is the subject of the chapter 2.3.3.

I will quote as examples narrative passages from the *Jaiminīya, Pañcaviṃśa* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas*. The *Jaiminīya* and the *Pañcaviṃśa* are attached to the *Sāmaveda* which presents the chants (*sāman*) used in the rituals with the corresponding words from the *Ṛgveda*. The *Pañcaviṃśa* is older of the two (ca. 10th - 9th centuries BCE). It has fewer narratives than the *Jaiminīya* (ca. 9th - 8th centuries BCE) and those which they share appear in a shorter and simpler form. The *Śatapatha* is connected to "white" branch of the *Yajurveda*[366] and to the ritual procedure of the priest who uses *mantras* from this

[363] The younger *Saṃhitās* (those belonging to the *Yajurveda*), that are approximately from the same age as the older *Brāhmaṇas*, contain also simple stories, legends and mythical tales.

[364] This was a long sacrifice containing many parts. There were several alternative procedures. The *Aitareya* deals e.g. with the *agniṣṭoma* (simple one-day *soma* sacrifice), a year-long schedule of periodic *sattras* (*soma* sacrifices lasting 13-60 days, or 100 days)), and the *agnihotra* (a daily morning and evening oblation to the god Agni.

[365] The respective dating of the *Brāhmaṇas* may be summed up here. The oldest are the *Pañcaviṃśa* and *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇas* (10th - 9th c. BCE) and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (7th c. BCE) belongs to the latest strata. The *Aitareya* and the *Kauṣītaki* (the other Ṛgvedic *Brāhmaṇa*), together with the *Jaiminīya*, are placed between these, around 9th and. 8th centuries BCE, but in these as well as the other *Brāhmaṇas* some parts of the text are older than others. The basis of the relative chronology are the grammar and the style of the texts. For the relation between *Pañcaviṃśa* and *Jaiminīya*, which are parallel texts, see Bodewitz 1990: 19-21. (O'Flaherty (1985) gives a too early date for *Jaiminīya*.) The older texts show clear division of past tenses: the imperfect is used for distant, mythical past (the main narrative tense); the aorist for recent past; the perfect for a state attained by some action in the past. Later the narrative perfect started to push the imperfect aside, and the style became less formulaic. See also Oldenberg 1917: 25ff,, Gonda 1975: 357-360, 410-421; Witzel 1987: 392-403.

[366] It has been preserved in two recensions, *Mādhyandina* and *Kāṇva*. *Kāṇva* is the older one. Of the nature and relation of these texts see Witzel 1987: 392-296; Gonda 1975: 351-356. Gonda remarks: "The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* [...] to a certain extent provides us with legendary and terminological links between the Vedic culture on the other hand and India of the Great Epic and ancient Buddhism on the other [...] (1975: 355). The same can be said about the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*.

corpus.[367] The *Jaiminīya* contains the story of Cyavana, which will be discussed in 2.3.2, and also many other tales, both original narratives and old ones that have been reshaped. These are colourful, often indecent and told in vivid, rambling style.[368] The huge *Śatapatha* has many tales of creation as well as reworkings of old legends, such as the story of the deluge and the legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī, which both appear elsewhere in the Indian literature.

As a rule, the narratives of the *Brāhmaṇas* are connected to the description of the ritual and occasioned by it. Many times the connection seems clumsy and artificial. The idea has been that the ritual is primary and the narratives are present to explain how it or some detail of it came about and why certain ritual or certain *mantra* (Ṛgvedic verse) or *sāman* (melody attached to a verse) must be used in a certain occasion and/or in a certain ritual. This link explains how and why the longer narratives like those of Cyavana and Śunaḥśepa were composed. But even though the primary motivation may have been the establishment, clarification and explanation of a ritual, the basic structural procedures and mechanisms have been textual. When an earlier text was lifted from its original context and inserted in a later text, the modifications to produce a new text concerned not only the content, but the logical, structural and stylistic coherence of the narrative.

As mentioned before, in the *Brāhmaṇas* the outer frame is not a narrative but another type of text: a description and explanation of a ritual. Only in longer composite narratives there are frames that are pure narratives. Looking back to the chapter 2.1.1., one must consider using a theoretical model that takes this into account. The definition of a frame narrative may be such that allows the frame to be something else than a narrative: it is enough that it is *a coherent text* that surrounds a separate narrative so that a frame structure is formed (1).[369] Another solution is to broaden the definition of a narrative, so

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[367] For the genres of Veda, see p. 54 n. 245 and n. 246. The four classes of officiating priests corresponding the four genres were *hotar* (*Ṛgveda*), *udgātar* (*Sāmaveda*), *adhvaryu* (*Yajurveda*) and *brahman* (*Atharvaveda*) which each had three assistants. These priests appear e.g. in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa (2.3.3.).

[368] O'Flaherty in her collection (1985) calls these stories "folklore" (9-15) and emphasizes the difference of its style and treatment of the narrative material as compared to other *Brāhmaṇas* (23-28, 118). These assumptions have been criticized e.g. by Smith (1987:389), Witzel (1987: 404 n. 48) and Bodewitz (1990: 21-24). According to Smith, "the difference between the JB (*Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*) and others is [thus] of degree, not of kind". Both Smith and Bodewitz point out that the terms "folktale" and "folk literature" are complicated and should not be used as summarily as O'Flaherty does. The interest in sex and obscenity and descriptions of violence do not mean that the text is "folkloric" or "archaic" in origin, as O'Flaherty seems to think. The question of "folklore" in old Indian literature was discussed in 1.3. and 2.1. and will be returned to in 2.7. below.

[369] If neither of the two components contain narrative elements, we can talk about framed and embedded texts but not about frame narratives (or "frame stories").

that, in a way, one can read a description of a ritual as a story that tells about a ritual (2). This broadening has been done in various ways in modern narratology, so that not only historical works and diaries but such discourses as news, lawsuits and medical reports and even non-verbal communication like pieces of music have been treated as narratives.[370] It has also been noted that early audiences have interpreted fiction as factual, especially in religious context (myths and legends). In this way the sphere of Vedic rituals and their cosmic correspondences embraces both fiction and non-fiction.[371]

The question about the distinction between factual and fictional goes easily to a direction that is outside the scope of this study.[372] It is relevant, though, when discussing these texts and also the *Mahābhārata*. Nelles on his study of frame narratives is ready to use a wide definition of narrative which undoubtedly would include such a text as the frame in the *Brāhmaṇas*.[373] In the chapter 2.6. this possibility is considered. But to stay on the safe side, I use here basically the solution (1), treating the frame only as "a text", not a narrative. However, I will call the structures in the *Brāhmaṇas* proper frame narratives and not proto-frames, because there is a sustained textual frame around the narratives; there is a narrator;[374] and the embedded stories are not fragments, quotations or references but complete narratives. They also have clear boundaries, so that one can tell where the frame ends and the embedded narrative starts, and vice versa. Finally, the relation between the frame and the embedding is similar to later frame narratives: the embedding is an "example" or an "explanation" of something that is discussed in the frame. But to remind the reader of the special type of these tects, I will call the brāhmaṇic exegesis "the exegetical frame" and the narrator "the exegetical narrator".[375]

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[370] E.g. Marie-Laure Ryan has explored the possibility for non-verbal narrative (2005: 292). The "natural narratology" of Monika Fludernik could offer a model that gives descriptions a narrative quality. According to Fludernik bases the definition of narrative on everyday communication that conditions and sensitivizes people to narrative structures. Narrativity is "not a quality inherent in a text, but rather an attribute imposed on the text by the reader who interprets the text as narrative, thus *narrativizing* the text" (Fludernik 2003: 244). Thus one may narrativize many kinds of texts that are traditionally not classified as narrative. In spite of this, Fludernik draws a line between non-narrative (factual) and narrative (fictional, make-believe) texts: in her opinion, e.g. historical writing is not processed by a reader as a narrative.

[371] See O'Flaherty 1985: 17-21.

[372] For a general outline about this issue from the point of view of narratology, see Schaeffer 2013. See also Wolf 2006a for the spheres where the concepts of framing and embedding have been recently applied.

[373] Nelles 1997: 116-120.

[374] See the chapter 2.6.

[375] I will return to the exegetical narrative and exegetical narrator in the chapters 2.6. and 3.6. NB: here "the exegesis" is used in the traditional sense of the word ("explanation of (sacred) texts"), not in the narratological sense ("narration" as contrasted with diegesis "narrative").

2.3.1. "Something new, something old..."[376]

Before proceeding, there is one question to be answered: why did the composers and compilers of exegetic texts use embedded narratives? They seem to explain and justify the corresponding ritual details — but how? In most cases the connection with the ritual does not appear to be pre-existent but having been formed *ad hoc*, for the first time in this particular occasion. When the same story appears in different *Brāhmaṇas*, the link to the ritual may be stronger or weaker or completely different.[377]

Without plunging into the question of the reciprocal influence of the various *Brāhmaṇas*, it may be said that it is probable that many of the embedded narratives belong to "the floating mass" of the oral narrative tradition discussed above (pp. 51). It possessed at least a core of well-known stories, some of which had already been absorbed to the textual tradition in the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. Their uninterrupted presence in an oral-literary continuum is shown by the fact that they also pop up later in the *Bṛhaddevatā*, in the two epics, in the *Purāṇas* and in other narrative literature.[378] It was natural to use them to illuminate the details of the rituals, in the same way that it had been natural to refer to them in the Ṛgvedic hymns when the evocation of a god needed to be backed by mythological or other narrative material.[379]

It is very possible that they were also narrated "for the joy of telling a good story", especially in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* which has the most elaborate stories. There had to be some connection to the subject matter of the ritual, but otherwise the instict of storytelling clearly dominated. Perhaps the narratives served also to aid the memory.

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[376] "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" refers naturally to the items that the bride should wear in the wedding: this list of things that bring you luck is supposedly derived from English folklore.

[377] O'Flaherty 1985: 12-15.

[378] The oral-literary continuum may be compared to Greek mythology behind the works of Homer, Hesiod and Greek drama writers and the Finnish oral poems that formed the basis of the *Kalevala*. See Gonda 1975: 404-409. The *Bṛhaddevatā* is a compendium of myths that was composed c. 4th century BCE. See chapter 3.5.3.

[379] Commenting on the *Aitareya* and *Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇas*, Gonda summarizes sternly: "[...] his [= the redactor's] main purpose is to account for and justify the deities addressed, the *mantras* applied — i.e. their use in their ritual setting — the sacrificial material used and the ritual acts prescribed. His devices to realize these intentions are emphasis placed upon a single word of a *ṛg*-stanza, illustrative stories of exemplary ritual procedures, references to analogy (for instance in daily experience)." (Gonda 1975: 345). It must be added that for the composers of the *Jaiminīya*, *Pañcaviṃśa* and *Śatapatha* the main purpose was at times to tell that illustrative story.

Stories are easier to memorize than non-fiction texts especially if both are in prose.[380] Finally it can be noted that there is a strong component of original artistic invention in the late *Brāhmaṇas*: the composers combined old motifs, modified plots and invented new details to make a better narrative.

The narrator of the *Brāhmaṇas* is basically the same throughout each text, and their matter-of-fact tone and voice do not alter much when they switch from the exegetical description and explanation to the narrative.[381] There are exceptions to this: sometimes a change in the voice (and grammar) can reveal that a part of text has been lifted *en masse* from other source. If the narrator becomes interested in commenting the story and not its use in the ritual, there is a split into two narrating voices: this can be seen e.g. in the brāhmaṇic version of the narrative of Purūravas and Urvaśī.

The exegetical narrators do not, as a rule, use the first person singular of themselves[382] but build their authority over the subject in the exegetical parts of the text by telling what a certain other authority or simply "he" or "they" have ordered, said or done and choosing then the right opinion. They present themselves as connoisseurs of the linguistic, mythologic and ritualistic facts they talk about and objective judges over the various opinions they quote ("about this they say..."). Sometimes they reject these opinions and sometimes they agree with them, but almost always the narrator "has the last word".[383]

Stylistically the prose that the narrator uses is simple and precise; however, in the later *Brāhmaṇas* like the *Śatapatha* the sentences become longer and more complex and descriptions more elaborate. Basically the use of parataxis (simple clauses after one another) is a rule and gives many passages a monotonous air. Repetition of phrases, clauses and passages is also frequent. The monotony is broken by quotes of direct speech and short dialogues, which are also frequent. Narratives that are recounted often, like the combat of gods and demons and the slaying of Vṛtra by Indra, are told highlighting each time different details, depending on the context. On the other hand there are many

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[380] The symbols, analogies and etymological connections provided also aid for memory. An example of an etymogical *aide-memoire* in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* IV.5.2. is the sun-eclipsing demon Svarbhānu (Rāhu in later mythology; see p. 70 n. 299) who is connected with two etymologic clues to the days of the *svarasāman* chants: "The demoniac Svarbhānu struck the sun with darkness: by means of the *svara* (*sāman*) the Gods delivered (*aspṛṇvan*) it." (Translation by Caland (1931: 53)

[381] I generalize here by compressing the composers of different *Brāhmaṇas* into one. There are stylistic differences but they do not change much the picture created by the overall authoritative voice heard in the texts.

[382] Sometimes the narrator uses a first person plural ("Now we shall explain...).

[383] Differences in opinions lead many times to long disputations between the arguments and their proofs. The structure of the discourse of the narrator in the frame is analyzed in more detail in the chapter 2.6.

shortenings and ellipses: as in the Vedic hymns, the audience is expected to know what is talked about.[384]

The narratives are not introduced by such expressions as "Now follows the story of..." or "Now I shall tell about... " or "This is illustrated by...". [385] If there is a short prelude, it mentions the ritual or the *sāman* (song) that prompts the narrative, as in the example below.[386] A stronger connection between the exegesis and the narrative is made *within* the narrative by marking the highest point of the plot (success, deliverance etc.) by a switch to the level of exegesis. As the first example I give the narrative of Dīrghajihvī ("Madam Long-Tongue") or *Saumitra*, that is told in the *Jaiminīya* and *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇas*. Here is the version of the latter in Caland's translation.[387] The embedded narrative is in italic. In the examples from the *Brāhmaṇas* the frame is indicated with bold letters to separate the two levels better.

VIII.6.9-11.

9. **There is the saumitra (= the sāman of Sumitra).**

10. *A (certain) female, sacrifice-destroying, Ogre, Dīrghajihvī, kept here licking at the (butter of the) sacrifice. Indra despaired of slaying her by any stratagem whatsoever. Now Sumitra, Kutsa, was a handsome (young man). To him he (Indra) said: "Call her to thee." He called her to him. She said to him: "This truly is unheard by me; but it is rather pleasant to my heart." He (Sumitra) came to an understanding with her. At the trysting-place they both (Indra and Sumitra) slew her. That forsooth, at that moment had been their wish.* **The saumitra (-sāman) is a wish-granting chant. Through this (sāman) he obtains (the fullfilment of) his wish.**

11. *(But) an (unauspicious) voice addressed him (Sumitra) thus: "Being Sumitra ("Good-Friend") thou has done a bloody deed." Grief tormented him. He performed austerities, he saw this saumitra (-sāman). Through it he drove away his grief.* **He who, in lauding, has applied the saumitra (-sāman), drives away his grief.**

First it is told that there is a special chant called *saumitra* (9). Then comes the story (10). A demoness who has a long tongue spoils the sacrifice of the gods by licking off all the

[384] The simple paratactic prose style ("Then he said... then he did... then he went...") with rhythmic repetitions of phrases and micro-motifs is common in all ancient narratives. In Indian context it is connected to the oral transmission of the literature. Without the aid of the metre and mnemonic techniques applied to the Ṛgvedic verses it was not easy to commit longer texts into memory. The only thing that supported any systematic transmission of narratives was the sacral authority of the texts that framed them. See 2.1.2. and 2.6..

[385] The different (greater) parts of exegesis are, on the other hand, often introduced or summarized by phrases like "Now we will explain this and this" and "Those were the opinions of x and y".

[386] Again, in later, more verbose texts also introductory phrases become more usual.

[387] Caland 1931: 328.

butter from it. Indra is helpless and calls in a handsome young man, Sumitra of the clan of Kutsa, and asks him to seduce the demoness. The demoness is surprised and happy and yields. When Sumitra and the demoness make love, Indra kills her with the aid of Sumitra. Then the frame reappears and gives the connection: because the killing was their wish, the chant of Sumitra (*saumitra*) is a wish-fulfilling chant.

This is not enough. After the killing of the demoness Sumitra hears a voice that accuses him of murder (11). By chanting the *saumitra* he releases himself of his grief (and guilt). The connection is reaffirmed on the level of the exegetical frame: whoever feels grief, is released of it by the *saumitra*. It is difficult to say whether the *sāman* had originally two purposes, or was the other purpose added because the narrative did not stop after the wish was fulfilled.

The version of the *Jaiminīya* is longer and tells the story in a different way.[388]

I. 161-163

Dīrghajihvī ("Lady Long-Tongue") was a female demon. She was habitually licking the soma, living by the northern sea; and she licked also the soma every time it was pressed in the southern, western and eastern seas. Indra wanted to get hold of her, but could not. Then he said: "Nobody shall perform sacrifices now, when Long-Tongue licks up all the soma." [He went] to Sumitra, son of Kutsa, who was a handsome young man. He said to him: "You are handsome, Sumitra, women like to flirt with a handsome man. Try to flirt with this Long-Tongue!" He [Sumitra] went to her and said: "Make love with me, Long-Tongue!" She said: "You have [only] one penis, [but] I have a vagina in all of my limbs. We do not match." Then he want back to Indra and said: "She said to me: 'You have [only] one penis, [but] I have a vagina in all of my limbs. We do not match.'" Then Indra said: "I make penises for all your limbs." With these in his body he went to her and said: ""Make love with me, Long-Tongue!" She said: "You have [only] one penis, [but] I have a vagina in all of my limbs. We do not match." He said: "I have a penis in all of my limbs." She said: "Now, let me see." He showed them. She was made happy by them. Then she said: "Come, what is your name?" "My name is Sumitra ("Good-friend")." "That is a beautiful name", she said. They lay down beside each other. When he had satisfied himself and her, he pinned her down. She said: "Are you not a Good-friend?" He said: "I am Good-friend to good friends but Durmitra ("Bad-friend") to bad friends."[389] Then he saw the Saumitra [sāman] and praised with it, and it called Indra to him. Indra took the verse in anuṣṭubh metre as his weapon and ran to them, and with the verse ***"You friends, to keep the pressed soma intoxicating you forcefully push back the long-tongued bitch"***[390] *he killed her*.

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[388] Translated into German (and Latin!) by Caland (1931: 329) and English by O'Flaherty (1985: 101-102). This translation is mine.
[389] In the *Mahābhārata* there is a similar hidden double name: the main villain Duryodhana ("Bad fighter") is Suyodhana ("Good fighter") to his loving parents.
[390] The *Ṛgveda* 9.101.1.

These verses slay brotherly rivals and demons; those who praise with these verses slay their evil rivals and drive off cruel demons.

In this version the demoness is made more horrible (and more threatening to men) by giving her multiple vaginas.[391] She is not killed by Sumitra and Indra, but by Indra alone. The killing is prepared by the dialogue of the demoness and Sumitra, in which Sumitra gives a machiavellian explanation to his name: he is a good friend to good friends and a bad friend to bad friends. The demoness is, by all appearances, a bad friend. In this way Sumitra gets rid of the guilt that must be tackled separately in the *Pañcaviṃśa*. Then Sumitra "sees" the *saumitra* and chants it. The *sāman* serves as a call for Indra to come and kill the ogress. For this Indra uses a Ṛgvedic verse about "a long-tongued dog" as his weapon (marked with bold italic in the example). This is a helpful reference to the probable origin of this tale.

In the *Jaiminīya* there is a connection to both the *saumitra sāman* and a Ṛgvedic verse to long-tongued enemy of the sacrifice, but the link between the meaning and purpose of the *saumitra* (wish-fullfilling) is weakened, as a more powerful tool, a Vedic *mantra* is introduced in the end. *Saumitra sāman* calls Indra, but the verse kills the enemy. On the other hand the narrative is more compact and coherent, because the frame does not cut it into act one and act two. Sumitra frees himself from grief and guilt by giving his name additional meaning and by letting Indra do the dirty work. It is typical of the *Jaiminīya* to polish the narrative on the cost of the order and logic of the ritual and its exegesis. It is probable that the *Jaiminīya* has reworked the narrative of the *Pañcaviṃśa*. The *Pañcaviṃśa* is considered to be older of these texts, and at least the motif of multiple vaginas in the *Jaiminīya* is an elaboration. Also the quibbling with the meaning of the name to spare Sumitra from need of expiation looks like an stylistical emendation to the earlier narrative. The Vedic reference may be early or late.[392]

In another example, which is taken from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the first part of the story ("The flood", VIII.1.1-6) has no connection with the ritual text that frames it. It is only the second part ("The daughter of Manu", VIII.1.7-10) that is linked with the

[391] O'Flaherty suggests that the idea for this came from her long tongue that has phallic implications (1985: 102).

[392] Later reworkings of recycled tales often explain away the misdeeds and flaws of the heroes and find excuses also for the crimes of many of those who are villains in the earlier versions. This can be seen in the narratives of the *Mahābhārata*. However, shorter and simpler versions are not necessarily older. Sometimes narratives are shortened when adapted, because of different emphasis or different frame, sometimes the sources may have been deficient.

ritual described after the story (VIII.1.11-44). The first part is more interesting, having most of the action and a motif that is well-known not only in India but also elsewhere. The story is similar to the Biblical narrative and also to older, Mesopotamian version, but one cannot tell who has borrowed from whom, if anybody, for flooding was a regular phenomenon both in Mesopotamia and in India.

The formal subject of the chapter VIII is *iḍā*, a ritual that has the same name as the daughter of Manu. In Vedic mythology Manu is the progenitor of the human race and the institutor of sacrifice. The fish that saves him was later identified with the creator god Brahmā.[393] In later literature (e.g. in the *Mahābhārata*) the narrative of the flood remains essentially the same: perhaps it was so well known that there was no space for elaboration or changes.

The chapter begins with the story and ends with the framing exegesis. In addition the exegetical narrator makes a comment in the middle of the sacrifice in the VIII.9. Again the frame is indicated with bold (normal) and the embedding is in italics.

VIII.

(1-6: "The Flood")[394]

In the morning they brought Manu water for washing, just as they do nowadays, for washing the hands. When he was washing, a fish came into his hands. It spoke to him like this: "Ward me, and I will save you!" "Of what will you save me?" "A flood will carry away all these creatures: from that I will save you!" "How should I ward you?" It said: "As long as we [fish] are small, a disaster can meet us. Fish eat fish. First you shall keep me in a jar. When I grow out of it, you shall dig a pit and keep me in it. When I grow out of it, you shall take me to the sea, and then I shall not be destroyed." It [the fish] soon became a fish called jhaṣa; for it grows largest [of all fish]. Then it said, "In such and such a year the flood will come. Then you shall listen to my advice and build a ship, and when the flood has risen you shall enter this ship, and I shall save you from it [the flood]." After he had kept it in this manner, he took it to the sea. And in the same year which the fish had mentioned to him, he heeded [the advice of the fish] and built a ship, and when the flood had risen, he entered the ship. Then the fish swam to him, and tied the rope of the ship to its [the fish's] horn, and in this way he [Manu] travelled swiftly to a northern mountain. Then it [the fish] said: "I have saved you. Fasten the ship to a tree, but do not let the water cut you off when you are on the mountain. As the water subsides, you may go down little by little." Thus he went down little by little, and for that reason that [slope] of the northern mountain is called "Cautious descent". Then the flood swept away all creatures, and Manu alone remained.

[393] In the *Mahābhārata*; see p. 231 n. 813. Still later the fish was identified with the god Viṣṇu as one of his ten *avatāras*.
[394] My translation.

(7-10: "The daughter of Manu")

Desiring offspring, he kept himself busy with worship and austerities. At this time he performed also a pāka-sacrifice, that is, he offered clarified butter, sour milk, whey and curds by the water. In this way there appeared, after a year, a woman. She rose up and had a body, and clarified butter gathered in her footprints. Mitra[395] *and Varuṇa came to meet her. They said to her: "Who are you?" She answered: "I am the daughter of Manu." They said: "Say that [you belong to] us.". She said: "No, I belong to that man who begat me." They wanted to have a share of her. She did not say yes or no but only passed them by, and she came to Manu. Manu said to her: "Who are you?" She answered: "Your daughter." He asked: "How, fair one, can you be my daughter?" She answered: "The offerings that you made by the water, clarified butter, sour milk, whey and curds: with them you have begotten me. I am the blessing: use me at the sacrifice! If you resort to me, Iḍā,*[396] *you will become rich in offspring and cattle. Whatever blessing you wish by me, all that shall be given to you!" Thus he sacrificed with Iḍā in the middle of the sacrifice.* **For what is offered between the fore-offerings and the after-offerings, it is the middle of the sacrifice**.

With Iḍā he worshipped and performed austerities, and wished for offspring. With her he generated this race, which is this race of Manu. And whatever blessing he asked by her, all that was given to him.

Now this Iḍā [daughter of Manu] is actually the same as the *iḍā* [sacrifice], and whoever, knowing this, performs with the *iḍā*, begets this same race which Manu generated, and whatever blessing he asks through it, all that is given to him.

The rest of the chapter (12-44) describes the *iḍā* sacrifice.

The next example is again from the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (I.184).[397] The plot, telling of three brothers, has a marked fairy-tale colouring. This is reflected e.g. by the names of the brothers, which are simply First, Second and Third (Ekata, Dvita, Trita). The motif of the superior brother being left in a well by the other brothers is similar to the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. The narrative is interesting not only because of the plot but also because of the prehistory of its main character.

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[395] Mitra is a god of older Vedic religion who almost always appears together with Varuṇa, maybe as a lighter twin of a darker brother. Both are old Indo-European gods (see p. 109 n. 448).

[396] Here is a double meaning: "if you sacrifice with *iḍā* ceremony" or "if you live with Iḍā [the daughter]". Like Noah, Manu starts the human race anew by having children with his daughter. The primeval incest between Heaven and his daughter is present in the *Ṛgveda* (I.75.5.; X. 61.5-7); in the *Brāhmaṇas* (*Aitareya* III 33-34; *Śatapatha* I.7.4.1-8) the incestuous pair is the creator god Prajāpati and his daughter. In the *Śatapatha* the hunter god Rudra punishes Prajāpati by piercing him with an arrow, but other gods heal him. The idea is, as in the myth of Yama and Yamī (pp. 81-82) to create the world in this way as there are no others to do it. Iḍā is not Manu's daughter in a physical sense and the union is wrapped inside the ritual language, so this story veers coyly away from the old myth.

[397] This story is not found in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*.

Trita, also called Trita Āptya (Āptya being a name of a clan or a species),[398] is mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* many times, usually in association with Indra as being the god's ally. Trita is a deity or a deified hero. He kills Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvastṛ, on behalf of Indra (the *Ṛgveda* X.8.8-9.). Elsewhere he is said to take the ill deeds and bad dreams of men to himself (VII.47.13-17). He is a among the first divine pressers of the sacrificial drink *soma* (IX.34.4, II.11.20)[399] and the heavenly keeper of *amṛta*, the drink of immortality (VI.44.23). His legend is fragmentary, and so his name[400] seems to have inspired the invention of brothers called Ekata and Dvita.

The story in the *Jaiminīya* is based on the hymn I.105. to All-Gods (*Viśve Devās*) in the *Ṛgveda*. All but the last of its 19 stanzas end with the line: "Listen to my words, O Heaven and Earth!". Most of the stanzas do not refer to any special person. In the stanzas 1-6 an anonymous voice evokes celestial objects like moon and the stars and the gods who protect the law. The stanza 7 identifes the speaker as "a man who in bygone times sang prayers in the *soma* sacrifice": this could be a reference to Trita. The stanza 9 mentions Trita Āptya ("Where the seven [heavenly] seers [?][401] are shining, thereto is my family bond stretched; this Trita Āptya knows well, and asks [to affirm] this kinship"[402]), but then again a string of more general stanzas follow (10-16). Only in the stanza 17 Trita is brough to focus more clearly, as the narrator sums up his situation: "Trita, put down in a well, calls to the gods for help. Bṛhaspati heard his call and made the tight place broader."[403]

The stanzas 9 and 17, of which the latter clearly makes Trita a seer (*ṛṣi*), not a god, are the basis of the *Jaiminīya* story. The embedded narrative is again marked with italic. It is to be noted that the frame (marked with bold) interrupts (and "closes") the embedded narrative two times in the middle. This example shows how the brāhmaṇic narratives display metanarrative qualities. Like a salesman, the exegetical narrator is over-enthusiastic in listing all kinds of benefits that the *Traita sāman* will bring and hovers fussily over the narrative, ready to stop narrating and advertise the chant. Probably

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[398] In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (1.2.3.1.) the three Āptyas (Ekata, Dvita and Trita) are born, when the god Agni is angry when he is taken out from the waters and he spits on it. The spittle produces the three brothers. The name Āptya is never used alone in singular, there is always the "first name" in front of it.
[399] In this respect and others also he has a counterpart Thraētaona in Avestan mythology.
[400] It may be that Trita ("the third one") referred originally to the place of Trita in the row of the pressers of Soma. Or it may even have meant something else than the ordinal.
[401] Perhaps a reference to the Plough, which was connected with the Seven Seers.
[402] My translation.
[403] Jamison (2014: 248-250) analyzes the hymn as being an *omphalos*, the core of which are the verses 9-10. The other verses form circles around the core, but at the same time the thought of the poet progresses from doubt and anguish to reassurance. See also Jamison 2007.

the composers were so used to commenting ritual details that they could not help commenting narratives also.

1.184.

He should ask help with *traita* [= Trita sāman]. *The Āptyas became thirsty when they were in the forest. They captured two gifts [= cows]. They found a well. Neither Ekata nor Dvita wanted* to *climb down. So Trita climbed down. When the other two brothers had satisfied their thirst, they put a chariot wheel on him, and taking the cows they went away. He made a wish: "Let me get out of here, let somebody help me." He saw this chant and praised with it. As he pronounced the last words: " ... **with drops**!", Parjanya*[404] *let the rain pour upon him so that he was raised up. He rose up until he reached the chariot wheel that had been put upon him.* **For that chant is such that gets you out and brings you help**: *indeed he found a way out and found help. He traced their footsteps; and as he came to them, one of them changed into a bear and the other into a monkey, and they rushed away to the forest*. **So this is also a chant that helps one win one's fraternal rivals**, *for he made the two of them to change into a bear and into a monkey because those two bore a grudge towards their brother*. **Thus to him Parjanya pours rain. And there will be cows. He has captured many cows. Thus he who knows this [chant] gets cows and becomes rich in cows.**[405]

The story is found also in the *Mahābhārata* (9.35). As it is not taken up in the section 3, I discuss it shortly here. The frame in the epic is the second of the two outer frames: the sage Vaiśaṃpāyana is the narrator and the king Jānamejaya is the narratee.[406] There is no exegetical frame, but the exegesis has been woven into the narrative. The story is introduced in the normal style of this epic, by a summarizing mini-story given by the narrator and a demand of the narratee for the narrator to tell the whole story. Then the narrator tells the story.

There are many additions in the epic version. First, the excellence of Trita in performing rituals is highlighted. His two brothers want to get rich by the fruits of Trita's sacrifice. After a while they make an "evil" plan to take Trita's cows, attained by the sacrifice, reasoning that Trita can get other cows, being so clever. Before they can do this, however, they are attacked by a wolf when they are driving the cows in the forest. Trita escapes in terror, falls into a dried well and calls for help. Ekata and Dvita do not help but go away with the cows. Their motif is mixed: greed and fear (of the wolf). They do not put a wheel on the well, though. Trita sits in the well and believes he is dying. His only

[404] The god of rain.
[405] My translation.
[406] These frames are analyzed in chapters 3.1.1. and 3.1.2.

worry is that he has never performed a *soma* sacrifice. He summons his great mental powers, takes a weed imagining that it is the *soma* plant, and imagines butter, water and fires, and with these performs such a wonderful *soma* sacrifice that the gods in heaven get the shares. They are happy and give him a boon. His boon is, first, to get out from the well, and second, to make the well sacred, so anyone bathing in it has the same fruit as if he was performing a *soma* sacrifice. The river Sarasvatī rises and carries Trita up. He praises the gods. The he goes home, meets his brothers and curses them in fury. He changes them into animals with sharp teeth, like the wolf, and their offspring will be bears and cow-tailed monkeys.

One can see even in this short paraphrasis how the narrative of the *Brāhmaṇas* has been reworked in the *Mahābhārata* to emphasize the piety, mental powers and ritual expertise of Trita and the divine boons he gets by these qualities. This is in tune with the ideology of the outer frames of the Epic. The Vedic narratives are not only recycled mechanically but also modified to suit the different the frames that they are put into.

The last example in this chapter is the narrative of Purūravas and Urvaśī in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XI.5.1.1-17.) the Ṛgvedic version (X.95) of which has already been met in pp. 77-81 above. I will give the brāhmaṇic version here in full. The embedded narrative is in italic and the core narrative taken from the *Ṛgveda* in bold italic. The quoted *ṛc*-verses are explained by the exegetical narrator. His part (the frame) is indicated with bold (normal) letters.

XI.5.1.1

1. The apsaras [= divine nymph] Urvaśī loved Purūravas, the son of Iḷā. When she married him, she said: "You shall bed me three times a day, but you must not lie with me against my will. And you must not let me see you naked, for that is proper behavior when being with women."

2. Then she lived with him a long time. She got child with him: the time with him was so long. Then the gandharvas [wood-spirits] said to one another: "Indeed, Urvaśī has lived among men such a long time. We must invent a plot to bring him back to us." There was an ewe with two lambs that were tied to her couch, and the gandharvas carried off one of the lambs.

3. Se cried out: "Alas, they are taking away my little darling, ***as if were where there were no hero and no man****![407]" They carried off the second [lamb], and she said the same.*

4. Then he [Purūravas] thought: "How is it possible that there is no hero and a man there where I am?" So he sprang up after these [lambs] naked, as he was: he thought it would take too long to put on his clothes. Then the gandharvas gave out a flash of lightning, and she saw him naked as in broad daylight.

[407] *Ṛgveda* X.95.3.

Then she vanished, as she had said she will. He said: "I am coming back", and then he saw that she had vanished. He wandered all over Kurukṣetra and wailed in grief. And there was a lake of lotuses that was called Anyataḥplakṣā. When he walked on its bank, there were nymphs swimming in it who had the shape of geese.

5 And she [Urvaśī] recognized him, and said: "This is the man with whom I have lived." Then they said: "Let us show ourselves [in our real forms] to him!" She answered: "So be it." And they showed themselves to him.

6. He recognised her and pleaded her, saying this: "***Hark, my wife! [Be] thoughful [and] halt, you cruel woman, so that we can talk together. There must not be such thoughts that if left unspoken: they will not bring us comfort, even in the distant days***."[408] **"I ask you to stop, so we can talk": this is what he wanted to say.**

7. *She answered:* "***What use I have with such words of yours? I have gone away from you, like the first of the dawns. Return to your home, Purūravas: I am hard to catch, like the wind***."[409]. *"***You did not do what I had told you: I am hard to catch, return to your home!": this is what she wanted to say.**

8. *Then he said in grief*: "***Your lover shall vanish today to never return, going as far as the farthest distance. He will lie in the bosom of the Destruction, and wild wolves will tear him there***."[410] **"Your friend will hang himself, or go beoynd the pale, or the wolves or wild dogs[411] will devour him!" this is what he wanted to say.**

9. *She answered:* **"*No, do not die, Purūravas, do not vanish, do not let the malevolent wolves devour you. With women there is no friendship, they have the hearts of jackals*."[412] "Do not take this to heart! You cannot be a friend to a woman: go back to your home!": this is what she wanted to say.**

10."***When I walked among mortals in a different form, and for four years passed the nights there, then, once a day, I ate a drop of butter, and even now I am satisfied with it."[413]*** **This dialogue of fifteen verses[414] has been handed down to us by the Bahvṛkas**.[415] *Then she felt pity for him.*

11. She said: "Come again after a year, and for one night I will sleep with you, so that you will have a son." So he came back in the last night after a year had gone, and he saw that there stood a golden palace [by the lake]. Then they said to him:"You may enter." And then they brought her to him.

12. Them she said: "In the morning the gandharvas will give you a boon, and you must choose what you want." He said: "You may choose for me." She answered: "Say: let me be one of you!" In the morning the gandharvas gave him a boon; and he said: "Let me be one of you!"

13. They said: "Well, there is no such a sacrificial fire among mortal men that could make a human become one of us." So they put fire into a vessel and gave it to him and said: "If you use this in sacrifice,

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[408] *Ṛgveda* X.95.1
[409] *Ṛgveda* X.95.2.
[410] *Ṛgveda* X.95.14.
[411] The word here is *sālāvṛka*, "a house-wolf". The word is found also e.g. in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (8.9.10) and in the *Atharvaveda* (II.27.5) where Sāyana gives it the gloss "forest dog". It may refer to a wild dog, a jackal or a hyena. See Jamison 1991: 68-74, esp. n. 42 p. 68.
[412] *Ṛgveda* X.95.15.
[413] *Ṛgveda* X.95.16.
[414] The hymn has 18 verses in the *Ṛgveda*. It is not clear which are meant to be the extra verses and where did they come.
[415] *Bahu-ṛka*, "having lot of verses". These are the seers of the *Ṛgveda*.

you will become one of us." He took it [the fire] and he took his son, and he went towards home. He left the fire in the forest and went home with the boy. [He came back saying to himself] "I have come back", and he saw that it [the fire] had vanished.
14. In the place of the fire there was an aśvattha tree[416], and in the place of the vessel there was a śamī tree[417] Then he went back to the gandharvas. They said: "Cook for a year a gruel of rice that serves for food for four persons. Take each time three logs from the aśvattha tree, anoint them with ghee, and put them in the fire with verses that contain the words "log" and "ghee". That fire then will be the very fire [which is like that of the gods]."
15. They said: "However, this is considered the mystic way. Better to make an upper araṇi[418] of aśvattha wood, and a lower araṇi of śamī wood: that fire then will be the very fire [which is like that of the gods]."
16. They said: "However, this also is considered the mystic way. Better to make an upper araṇi of aśvattha wood, and a lower araṇi of aśvattha wood [also]: that fire then will be the very fire [which is like that of the gods]."
17. Then he made an upper araṇi of aśvattha wood, and a lower araṇi of Aśvattha wood. And the fire was the very fire [which was like that of the gods]. By offering like this he became one of the gandharvas.
Therefore let one make an upper araṇi of aśvattha wood, and a lower araṇi of aśvattha wood: that fire then will be the very fire [which is like that of the gods], and by offering like this he becomes one of the gandharvas.

This text brings up many interesting points in regard of the development of the frame narrative. It is not certain whether the composer of the *Brāhmaṇa* has been familiar with the story behind the Vedic narrative, or an alternative version of it, or whether he has himself invented a new narrative using the Ṛgvedic verses as the basis. This is related to a question about the persistence of an oral narrative tradition discussed before.[419] It may be assumed, however, that the ending of the narrative is new, because the Ṛgvedic narrative, even in a fragmented form, makes it clear that the story ends in separation of the lovers: the charm that is attached to it would otherwise be misleading and unnecessary. O´Flaherty has in his study talked about the obligatory happy endings in the *Brāhmaṇas*.[420] These are not based on stylistic preferences, but on the idea that in the world of the sacrifice (into which the embedded narratives are also drawn) success is guaranteed, if you know the right way to act (i.e. the right way to perform a certain ritual).

The protagonists of the brāhmaṇic narratives are modified to suit this satisfying closure: they are successful sacrificers. The composer of this text has put inside the

[416] ficus religiosa.
[417] mimosa suma.
[418] An *araṇi* is a tinder-stick with which a sacrificial fire is made.
[419] See p. 84-85.
[420] O'Flaherty 1985: 26.

narrative alternative versions of the rite (14-16), making this part of the narrative look like its exegetical frame. But the sacrifice serves also an important motif in the plot: without it the brāhmaṇic Purūravas would have the same fate as the Ṛgvedic Purūravas. By a suitable sacrifice he avoids death, becomes immortal and wins an eternal life with Urvaśī.

There are some changes that look illogical. The complaint that Urvaśī has made against Purūravas in the *Ṛgveda* seems to be forgotten.[421] Has he checked his behavior? Or does Urvaśī believe that he deserves a second chance? The brāhmaṇic narrative does not quote those verses where Urvaśī talks about the bad manners of Purūravas. If the audience does not know the original, they get a different view of the story. The happy lovers have been separated only by the ugly ruse of the gandharvas. But this is a real flaw: why should the gandharvas help Purūravas after this?[422] Such illogical turns in the plot are not rare in the narratives of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. It seems that the stories were inserted and consolidated while they were not yet been completely streamlined, unlike in the *Jaiminīya* (see next chapter). These changes are remarkable, though, because they tell quite a lot about the values and purposes of the composers of the *Brāhmaṇas*.[423]

In addition, the way different layers are brought into this brāhmaṇic narrative reveals the technique with which new texts were made of old texts. The fragments of the Ṛgvedic hymn X.95. are embedded in the later narrative (6-10) after the narrator, unlike the composer of the original hymn, has told the story chronologically to this point (1-5). A separate bit of the hymn is fitted in 3 to connect a detail that is obscure in the *Ṛgveda* to the present narrative which gives a gloss for it. In 6-9 the exegetical narrator suddenly becomes visible in order to clarify the Vedic dialogue. In 10 this emphatic narrator-persona, almost a separate "commentator figure", also gives the reference for the verses that were quoted. This is a clear example of metanarration: the narrator draws attention to the discourse and underlines the fact that it contains an older narrative made by other authors than this narrative here.[424] Then he stops commenting and returns to narrative mode, at the same time marking the boundary of the old and the new narratives. The story continues straight away from where it had ended in the *Ṛgveda*, maybe in the last

[421] In the *Ṛgveda* Urvaśī says that Purūravas has been rough, selfish and inconsiderate, especially in bed.
[422] Maybe the idea is that they will not be jealous any more when Purūravas is a gandharva like them.
[423] Indeed, one interesting feature is the taming of the apsaras. The fiery, independent soul has lost her divine aloofness and become more like a human female. This is not surprising: the character of the Ṛgvedic Urvaśī is a tough nut to crack even for modern scholars (see p. 68 n. 276 above).
[424] The narrator does not place himself to another level which he refers to, so this can be classified as a rhetorical metalepsis (see p. 18 notes 64 and 65).

desperate words of Purūravas (*Ṛgveda* X.95.17.), for the first clause in the new narrative is: "She felt pity for him".

The complete text is made of several layers that partly overlap each other. First, there is the exegetical frame, which gives glosses to the quoted verses, appears again in the end (the second part of 17) and colours also the description of different ways to execute the ritual in 14-16. Secondly, there is the brāhmaṇic narrative which spans from 1 to 5, halts for 6-10, and flows again from the end of 10 to 13, then hops along with the ritual considerations in 14-16 and reaches the satisfying closure in the first part of 17. In the middle of this narrative there is a passage (6-10) which I would call an embedding and a narrative on a secondary level, even though it is older that its surroundings: a succession of Ṛgvedic verses that have the same effect as in the *Ṛgveda*: they halt the action and bring emotions into the surface. They are glossed (for those who do not understand older Vedic Sanskrit) by the narrator in the guise of "a commentator figure" and the passage is glued into the new narrative from both ends. In the beginning of the embedding (6) there is an introductory clause: "He recognized her and pleaded her, saying this." And in the end (10) there is first a "footnote" ("the commentator figure" telling that the verses cited came from a poem by Vedic poets) and then a clause which marks the return to the brāhmaṇic narrative ("She felt pity for him.").

So we have here two frames inside each other: the outer frame (exegesis), which contains the first-level story (the brāhmaṇic narrative), which contains the second level story in the form of quoted dialogue (the older Ṛgvedic narrative). The embedding is used to give the story authority and resonance by forming a link to the *Ṛgveda*, but its meaning is changed by putting it to a frame that tells, essentially, another story.[425] We have also a narrator that does not only explain the ritual which is connected with the story but interrupts the story by multiple refrerences with their "translations" and bibliographic information. This reworked text proves that the frame narrative was alive and kicking already in the brāhmaṇic age, though its form is somewhat irregular. Moreover, all the manouvering described above is textual, even though the motivation behind it may come from ideology. There is no need to think about analogy to complex rituals. The composers

[425] The Ṛgvedic narrative is realistic: the couple is separated because of both general and personal issues (men and gods do not form durable unions, the woman is not happy with the man). The brāhmaṇic narrative is romantic: after a painful separation the couple finds a way to live happily together, forever. Of course, the world-view of the *Brāhmaṇas* is not romantic, but practical. Happy outcome is the product of the perfect sacrifice. But it is quite understandable that an author like Kālidāsa based his romantic poem *Vikramorvaśīyam* on the brāhmaṇic story, not on the earlier version.

of *Brāhmaṇas* knew well how to put texts inside each other and what effects they could obtain by doing this. They had seen this done already in the *saṃhitās*.

Next I will look at two complex narratives to affirm this conclusion.

2.3.2. The narrative of Cyavana

The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, book 3.[426]

120. **From these [verses] shall *cyāvana* [*sāman*] be sung.**[427] Cyavana, the son of Bhṛgu[428], knew the *Brāhmaṇa* of Vāstupa[429]. He said to his sons: "I know the *Brāhmaṇa* of Vāstupa. Therefore you should leave me to a forsaken place of sacrifice and go your own way." They said: "We cannot do that, people will scold us and hold it against us if would leave our father behind." "No", he said. "In this way you will be better off, and in this way I can hope to become young again; so leave me behind and go forth." When he ordered them to do so, they put him down by the Śaiśava[430] on the river Sarasvatī and went on. Having been left to the place of sacrifice, he uttered a wish: "Let me become young again, and let me have a young girl as a wife, and let me sacrifice with a thousand [cows]."

121. He saw this chant and praised with it. At that time Śāryāta, the descendant of Manu, had settled with his clan near that place. There were boys herding cows and sheep, who smeared him [Cyavana] with mud, dust, cowdung and ashes. Then he put a plight on the tribe of Śāryāta: a mother did not know her son, nor a son his mother.[431] Then Sāryata, the descendant of Manu, said: "Have you by any chance seen anything here that could have caused this?" They said to him: "Nothing else but this: there is an old, toothless man

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[426] My translation. Some parts are difficult and for them I consulted other translations, mostly Caland's. The edition of the second part of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* is printed badly and therefore extremely hard to read.

[427] The exegetical frame is indicated by bold face, as before. There are two embedded narratives, both told by the exegetical narrator, of which the first envelops the second. The first embedded narrative is normal text, the second embedded narrative is marked with italic.

[428] Bhṛgu and his clan are a priestly family associated with the *Atharvaveda* (see Gonda 1975: 267-268). In the *Brāhmaṇas* the Bhṛgus are mighty mythical worshippers like the Angiras, and Bhṛgu is the foster-son of the god Varuṇa (e.g. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.6; *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.42-44; see Macdonell 1981(1898): 140). They appear also in the *Mahābhārata*.

[429] *Vāstu* is a (forsaken and burned) sacrificial ground which has magical power. Vāstu-pa is "the lord of the *vāstu*": he is often identified to be Rudra, an erratic and mostly malevolent god, and a precursor of Śiva who lives on cremation ground and possesses yogic power. So Cyavana is versed in this kind of potent magical lore.

[430] The word Śaiśava comes from śiśu , "child" or "baby". It is not clear what kind of place Śaiśava is. Cyavana asks his sons to put him down in a forsaken sacrificial ground. Does this refer to Śaiśava? It appears to be a pond, as the Aśvins and Cyavana seem to plunge into it, and Cyavana comes up rejuvenated. It has been taken to mean some kind of a fountain of youth, but one may ask why Cyavana could not use it by himself. The end of the story reveals that it has nourished him, so it has also qualities of "horns of plenty". See also Witzel 1987: 382 n.10.

[431] This means that they went to bed together.

near, and the boys, cowherds and shepherds, have smeared him with mud, dust, cowdung and ashes. That could have caused this [situation]."

122. He [Śāryāta] said: "That was Cyavana, the son of Bhṛgu. He knows the *Brāhmaṇa* of Vāstupa, and it is probable that his sons have left him to the forsaken place of sacrifice." Then he ran to him [Cyavana] and said: "I bow to you, o sage; be kind to the clan of Śāryāta, o great man." It happened that Śāryāta had a beautiful daughter whose name was Sukanyā. He [Cyavana] said: "Then give me Sukanyā." "No", he [Śāryāta] said, "ask something else that has value." "No", he [Cyavana] said. "I know the *Brāhmaṇa* of Vāstupa, and you must put her down here this evening and go away with your clan." "Let us consider this by ourselves and give you an answer" [,Śāryāta said]. They negotiated by themselves and said: "We could obtain one or two valuable things with her, three at most. In this way we get everything with her. Come on, let us give her to him." They gave her to him. They said to her: "This weak old man is in no condition to come after us. At that moment, when we take our leave, you must run after us." So, when they took their leave, she stood up to run after them. Then he [Cyavana] said: "O snake, come and help your friend." And a black snake rose up in front of her. Seeing it she sat down again.

123. The Aśvins, who were healers, were roaming about.[432] They had a share in the *darvi* sacrifice[433] but not in the *soma* sacrifice. They came to her and said:"Maiden, this old defective man is not suitable to be a husband. Come and be our bride." "No", she said. "To whom my father gave me, he will be my husband." He [Cyavana] had heard this talk and when they [the Aśvins] went away, he said: "Maiden, what was this talk that I heard?" "Two men came to me, and they were most handsome." "What did they say to you?" "[They said:] Maiden, this old decrepit man is not suitable to be a husband. Come and be our bride." "And what did you say?" "No, I said, to whom my father gave me, he will be my husband."

124. This pleased him, and he said: "They are the Aśvins, who are healers, and who were roaming about. They have a share in the *darvi* sacrifice but not in the *soma* sacrifice. They shall return next morning and ask the same. Then you must say: 'You are the ones who are defective, for you can not drink *soma*, even though you are gods. My husband is a complete man, for he can drink *soma*.' Then they shall ask: 'Who has the power to make us drink *soma*?' You say: 'My husband.' For I have hope to become young again in this way." Next morning they came to her and said the same. She said: "You are the ones who are defective, for you can not drink *soma*, even though you are gods. My husband is a complete man, for he can drink *soma*." They asked: "Who has the power to make us drink *soma*?" She said: "My husband."

125. Then they said to him [Cyavana]: "O honorable seer, make us partake in the *soma*." "Very well, but you will make me young again", he said. And they pulled him down in the Śaiśava on the river Sarasvatī. He said: "Maiden, we all three will look the same after having bathed in the water. You will recognize me by this sign." They all came up looking the same and having most handsome appearance. But she recognized him [and said:] "This is my husband." They [the Aśvins] said to him: "Seer, we have granted your wish. Now you must teach us so that we can partake in the *soma*." He said: "The gods are offering in

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[432] The habit of the Aśvins to wander on earth among humans is held against them in the passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 4.1.5.13-16 which corresponds 3.127 in the *Jaiminīya* narrative.

[433] Originally the Aśvins were not allowed to drink the intoxicating *soma* in the sacrifice, but only hot milk or mead (*madhu*), like children. *Darvi* is a simple wooden cup and *darvihoma* a simple ritual where ghee or curds are offered. See the discussion on *madhu* and the *soma* sacrifice below.

Kurukṣetra a headless[434] sacrifice. They do not achieve what they want to achieve with the sacrifice, [because] the head of the sacrifice is missing. Therefore you must ask Dadhyañc[435], the descendant of Atharvan, what is missing; and he will teach you, so that you can partake in the *soma*."

126. **The head of the sacrifice that was missing is the sun, but it also the *pravargya*.**[436] *The Aśvins went to Dadhyañc, the descendant of Atharvan, and said to him: "Seer, we want to be your students." "What is your wish?" "We want to learn about the head of the sacrifice." "No", said he. "Indra has also learnt this, and said to me: 'If anybody else will hear about it, I will cut your head off', and I am afraid of that." "So teach us through the head of a horse." "Very well, but I want to see you talking together." Then they put his own head aside and planted a horse's head on him and sat there talking with each other, singing sāmans and pronouncing verses and mantras. Then he trusted them and taught them through the horse's head.*

127. Then Indra realized: "He has told them." He hurried to where they were and cut his [Dadhyañc's] head off, and it was a horse's head. But the crafty Aśvins put his own head back and then went to the gods who were offering with a headless sacrifice. They said to them: "You are offering with a headless sacrifice. [Therefore] you do not achieve what you want to achieve with the sacrifice." "Who knows about the head of the sacrifice?" "We know." "So sit down with us." "Give us soma cups." So they gave Āśvina soma cups for both of them. And they said to them: "You will be the adhvaryu[437] priests of the sacrifice and thus the head of the sacrifice, which you know, will be put on place." "Very well." They served as the adhvaryu priests and in this way partook in the soma.

128. Cyavana, the son of Bhṛgu, who had become young again, went to Śāryāta, the descendant of Manu, and performed for him a sacrifice on the highest level. And he [Śāryāta] gave him a thousand cows: these he had for offering. So Cyavana, after having praised with this *sāman*, become young again, and had thousand [cows] for offering. **Those wishes, the fullfilment of which is hoped with this *sāman*, shall be fullfilled. Whatever one wishes, using this *sāman*, he will obtain. With this *sāman* Cyavana got in Śaiśava by the river Sarasvatī all nourishment that he needed. Therefore this *sāman* gives also nourishment. Who knows this, and needs nourishment, shall get nourishment and be the best of his kind. Because Cyavana, the son of Bhṛgu, had seen it, the *sāman* is called *cyāvana*.**

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[434] A headless sacrifice is an incomplete sacrifice: an important ingredient (that which begins the sacrifice, and is its "head") is missing, and therefore the sacrifice does not succeed. The missing head, as it is explained, is the *pravargya* ceremony that brings the Aśvins to the sacrifice (see n. 149). In the narrative there are many kinds of heads, because there is also the change of the heads between Dadhyañc and the horse.

[435] Dadhyañc, "the warden of curd", is a son of the ancient fire-priest Atharvan and a fire-priest himself . He knows the secret abode of madhu/*soma* and other secrets too. See Macdonell 1981 (1898): 141-142. His association with Indra and the horse's head is explained below.

[436] In *pravargya* ceremony the milk that is offered to the Aśvins is boiled in a red-hot cauldron that symbolizes the sun.

[437] These are the main officiating priests in the sacrifice.

There are various layers in this narrative, and it is most useful to go first to the earliest fragments. This has been done already by several scholars but I think I can add something to their findings.[438]

The sources for this version of the Cyavana story are diverse. In the *Ṛgveda* there is first information about Cyavāna[439], Śaryāta [440] and Dadhyañc, secondly, the story of the rescue and rejuvenation of Cyavāna by the Aśvins, third, the story about Dadhyañc, the Aśvins and the horse's head, and finally the story god Indra and the horse's head.

"The old Cyavāna" appears as a rule in Ṛgvedic hymns that tell about the deeds of the Aśvins. In X.39.4. it is said that "You [Aśvins] made old Cyavāna run again swiftly like a chariot." I.117.13.: "With your mighty power, o Aśvins, you restored the youth of old Cyavāna." I.118.6: "From the sea you [Aśvins] raised the son of Tugra (i.e. Bhujyu, see p. 61 n. 251 above), and gave Cyavāna back his youth." VII.71.5: "You [Aśvins] released Cyavāna from old age." VII.68.6.: "And for him who was old Cyavāna, who gave offerings to you [Aśvins], you gave another shape." V.74.5: "You [Aśvins] took off the shape of old Cyavāna like a cloak. You made him young again and being like this, he could end the longing of his wife." The hymn X.59., in which Subandhu wants to lengthen his life with the help of gods, he mentions Cyavāna as a former example in the first stanza. In X.61.2-3 Cyavāna competes with certain Tūrvayāna in sacrificing: Cyavāna wins youth but his rival wins offspring. In this hymn the latter is considered a better option.

The examples prove that the legend of the rejuvenated Cyavāna who can return to his wife and satisfy her was quite well known in the Vedic times. In this context the most important of the fragments is I.116.10., which gives a summary of the main narrative in the *Jaiminīya* version. "You Nāsatyas [Aśvins] took off the body from the old Cyavāna

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[438] Especially the analysis of Michael Witzel (1987) must be recommended. Although his article is apparently hastily written and tries to put too many things into too little space, it is full of information about the structure and background of the text and his footnotes contain an extensive bibliography on the subject.

[439] In the *Ṛgveda* the name of the seer is Cyavāna (a present participle of the verb cyu- "to move"). Witzel suggests (1987: 387 and n. 21) that this might be a epitheton ("he who moves again" also in a sexual sense), and the real name of the old man could have been Praskaṇva. This shady person is mentioned a couple of times as a name: only in the *Ṛgveda* VIII.51.2 more is told: "(The king) Pārṣadvāna asked Praskaṇva, the grey (old) man, that lay there abandoned, to be there (as an officiating priest). The seer wished for a thousand cows. He was aided by Dasyave Vṛka (?)" This old seer, "left behind" (by his clan), who offers for a king and wishes for a thousand cows, resembles indeed very much Cyavana of the *Jaiminīya* narrative. Praskaṇva is said to be the poet of the *Ṛgveda* I.44-50. In 1.44.6. Agni is asked to lengthen his life; I.45.3 Agni is asked to hear his call. He is helped by Indra in VIII.3.9. If he is identical with Cyavāna, the epitheton must have been stuck to him quite early to blot off his real name.

[440] The form Śāryāta of the *Jaiminīya* is also a variant: the head of the clan (a king) is Śaryāta in the *Ṛgveda* and in the other *Brāhmaṇas*.

as if it were a garment. You lengthened the life of the one who was left behind, and you made him a husband of virgins."

Śaryāta (or Śāryāta) appears in the *Ṛgveda* only in passing and not in connection with Cyavāna. Dadhyañc on the other hand is a noted character. He is an ancient seer, a son of Atharvan, the primeval fire-priest (I.139.9.), and the one who kindled Agni (VI.16.14.). He performs rites for Indra (I.180.16.) who helps him to get cows (X.48.2.) He is the guardian of *madhu* (mead; see below) (IX.108.4.). His most distinctive feature is the horse's head[441] that the Aśvins give him. This narrative fragment is present in three hymns that are close together in the first book of the *Ṛgveda*. The second part of I.116.12. tells that: " [...] Dadhyañc, the son of Atharvan, told you about *madhu* through the horse's head." I.117.22: "You [Aśvins] brought a horse's head and gave it to Dadhyañc, the son of Atharvan, and to you, mighty healers, he revealed the secret of Tvaṣṭar, which is *madhu*.". Finally, in the stanza I.119.9. it is said: "You [Aśvins] pleased Dadhyañc, and the horse's head spoke to you".

That fact that the horse's head is later used by Indra is revealed in I.84.13-14. "Using the bones of Dadhyañc as his weapon, Indra, eager to attack, destroyed nine and ninety obstacles (or demons?). Searching for the horse's head, he found it among the mountains at Sūryanavan."[442] Nowhere is told who had cut the head off, but somebody must have done it, as it had been hurled so far that it had been lost in the mountains. And why did Dadhyañc need a horse's head? The Vedic verses say that the Aśvins heard the secret of *madhu* through it because they pleased Dadhyañc (this last morsel of information is developed in the *Jaiminīya* into "the examination" of the Aśvins in the 127). In the *Ṛgveda* the reason for the change of heads is not given. The crucial part of the narrative in which Indra forbids Dadhyañc to tell the secret (of *madhu*) and threatens to cut his head if he reveals it, is missing. Perhaps the narrative tradition gave alternative explanations that were competing with each other.

So, the brāhmaṇic retellers had two yarns to work on: (1) the narrative of the Aśvins, Dadhyañc and *madhu* (and the horse's head) and (2) the narrative of rejuvenated Cyavana. The first can be very ancient indeed. *Madhu* refers to honey and drinks and dishes in which honey is the main ingredient, and it is an old ritual substance.[443] In Vedic

[441] Some have suggested a connection between Dadhyañc and the mythical horse Dadhikrā.
[442] It is not clear whether the bones refer to the head. Had it been lost for so long that it had become a skull?
[443] The evidence concerning the use of honey (e.g. the Greek examples and the presence of the word in Fenno-Ugrian languages (**mete*-, cf. Proto-Indo-European **medhu*-) seems to support the fact that honey

India honey and curds were mixed to make *madhuparka*, a dish served to guests and also to gods. In the *Ṛgveda* a drink of milk and honey is given to Indra (VIII.4.8.).[444] In IX.11.2 it is told that the Atharvan priests prepare this drink. This ancient ritual ingredient was gradually replaced by *soma*. Accordingly, the Ṛgvedic hymns alternate between these two.[445] In the classic *śrauta* ritual honey was used only in the *madhugraha* of the *vājapeya* sacrifice.[446] Among the Vedic gods the Aśvins, however, were the ones connected with *madhu*. Honey is very frequently mentioned in hymns dedicated to them.[447] This indicates that they had preserved an earlier phase of Indo-European religion that was overrun by the later Vedic system. But they are "newcomers" and "new gods" for the Vedic point of view because the theorists and practicioners of the Vedic system thought that it was the oldest because it was eternal.[448] So they were originally excluded from the *soma* ritual.

The link between the story of rejuvenated Cyavāna and the story of Dadhyañc, *madhu* and the horse's head is provided by the Aśvins, who are active participants in both narratives. By the time the *Brāhmaṇas* were taking form, there were ritual concerns that affected the stories that were reused by them. The inclusion of the *pravargya* ritual (which involved milk and honey, and the Aśvins) into the *soma* sacrifice which had taken place when the classical ritual system was established, and it had to be backed by a mythological explanation.

The connection to the narrative of Cyavana/Cyavāna is not obligatory, however: the narrative of the Aśvins and Dadhyañc could have been combined with another feat of the Aśvins. Maybe the Cyavana story was chosen to be paired with the Dadhyañc story because the fullest account of it (probably used as some kind of a memo for the *Brāhmaṇa* version) appears in the hymn I.116. in the stanza 10 and the narrative of Dadhyañc and

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was ritually important at an earlier stage of religion than Vedic (or Iranian), namely in the common Indo-European era.

[444] Indra has probably entered the narrative of the horse's head by this link. Dadhyañc, the son of Atharvan, has prepared and stored first *madhu* and then *soma* for him. Indra is, after all, constantly meddling with *soma*: drinking it, defending it, hiding it. The struggle for the possession of *amṛta* (the potion of the immortality) is partly parallel to the narrative web around the use and guardianship of *soma*.

[445] Some translations give *soma* for the word *madhu*. This is not accurate.

[446] See e.g. Hillebrandt 1990 (1927): I: 318-120.

[447] They are called e.g. "honeyed", "the masters of honey", "those with chariots of honey", "the carriers of honey", "the pourers of honey" and "the bestowers of honey", they are compered to bees and asked to anoint the singer of the hymn with honey etc. (I.112.21.; I.106.10.; I.117.6.; I.180.1.; II.182.2.; III.58.4.; X.40.6.; X.41.3.).

[448] The Aśvins with their horses and their honey give support to the hypothesis that before the Vedic people came to India there had been an earlier wave on Indo-European migrants that had settled to the North-Western India around the beginning of 2nd millenium BCE. See Parpola 1988. By their older name the Nāsatyas the Aśvins are mentioned together with Mitra, Varuṇa and Indra in the treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni that was made in 14th century BCA, the Mitanni being speakers of an Indo-Iranian language. See Mallory 1991: 37-38.

the horse's head comes very soon after in the stanza 12. It must be noted that this connection was not made by most *Brāhmaṇas*: they refer only to the *soma* ritual of the gods in which the Aśvins are allowed to take part. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* is silent about the narrative and is content to state (1.18) that the Aśvins are *adhvaryus* of the gods (already). Only those two *Brāhmaṇas* that specialized in telling stories, the *Jaiminīya* and the *Śatapatha*, linked the two narratives to make a long complex narrative that incorporated also the story of the headless sacrifice of the gods.

As Witzel has pointed out,[449] the two *Brāhmaṇas* do this in a different way. The *Jaiminīya* tells the whole story when explaining the *cyāvana sāman*. The *Śatapatha* cuts it into two parts (IV.1.5.13-18 and XIV.1.1.17-24) because it connects it with two separate ritual explanations, the *soma* ritual in the former section and the *pravargya* ritual in the latter. The connection between these rituals and the corresponding parts of the story is nevertheless recognized by a reference in the end of the first part which tells where the second part is to be found.

The *Jaiminīya* version shows how cleverly the composers could combine separate narratives in this early age of Indian literature. The narrative of the Aśvins and Dadhyañc is embedded in the middle of the narrative of Cyavana, with changes to make it fit better. The plot of the second story presented a possibility to make the link by adding some significant details. In the original story the Aśvins rejuvenate Cyavāna simply because he prays for it. In the new story they strike a bargain (125): Cyavana promises to tell the Aśvins how to they can get accepted into the *soma* ritual and the Aśvins promise to make him young again. The mediator between the two negotiators is Sukanyā (124), a young maiden, whom Cyavana has won to himself before, not with the help of the Aśvins, but with his impressive magic powers[450], which disturb the life of the clan of Sukanyā's father Śāryāta and frighten Sukanyā into submission (121, 122.). In the *Ṛgveda* nothing is said about Cyavāna's ability to put a curse on a whole tribe or conjure giant snakes to come to his aid, but they are suitable for this new cunning Cyavana and anticipate the mighty brahmanical curses which guide the plot of the narratives of the *Mahābhārata*.

In the *Jaiminīya* narrative, Sukanyā is not a nameless virgin won by a rejuvenated old man: she has a name and a role in getting the Aśvins involved.[451]

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[449] Witzel 1987: 389-391.

[450] The fact that Cyavana knows the *Brāhmaṇa* of Vāstupa is mentioned three times.

[451] Not a too active role, though: she repeats faithfully what his husband has told her to say. But she is still presented as a positive actor in the story, as she defends her old husband before the most handsome young

Originally they want to seduce her, but then they become interested about his husband, who is not only a old dotard with a young wife. The most remarkable addition is of course that Cyavana is the one who has hatched the plot that enables the Aśvins to share in the *soma* ritual. He tells about the headless sacrifice of the gods which the Aśvins can heal with the knowledge they get from Dadhyañc (125).

In 126 the story leaves Cyavana and Sukanyā, residing on the earth, and raises to celestial sphere. This is significant, and marks also the change of level: although it has the same narrator, this is a separate narrative with separate protagonists: the Aśvins. They go to Dadhyañc to learn about the head of the sacrifice. Dadhyañc whose old duty has been to guard *madhu* is now a the possessor of the secret of the *soma* sacrifice. He tells the Aśvins that Indra knows it too. For some reason Indra does not tell it to the gods who have been toiling in the background, apparently for quite a long time, frustrated with their imperfect sacrifice. The idea of the companionship of Indra and Dadhyañc is taken from the *Ṛgveda*, but Indra's threat to cut off Dadhyañc's head if he shares the knowledge with others is a new motif, or a welcome retrieval of a lost piece of the story, as it serves to bind the narrative fragments together. The horse's head that is given to Dadhyañc gets a proper back-story: the Aśvins store the priest's original (human) head and put a horse's head to his shoulders not only to enable him to tell secrets but to protect him from Indra's revenge. But this is not enough to get Dadhyañc speak. He also want to listen to the Aśvins when they discuss the rituals by themselves, chant *sāmans* and recite mantras, to find out whether they are capable to become his disciples. This is very convincing in the context of a text that belongs to teachers and students of Vedic rituals.

127 compresses many events: Indra finds out, cuts Dadhyañc's head, the Aśvins give Dadhyañc his own head back and go without further ado to the sacrificing gods. After a rapid dialogue they are accepted to take part in the *soma* sacrifice as *adhvaryu* priests. The final section 128 returns to Cyavana, who performs a ritual for his father-in-law Śāryāta and wins a thousand cows. This completes the threefold wish he has made in first section (120) and testifies for the force of the *cyāvana sāman*. The frame is closed neatly.

Let us go back to the structure of the story. Its main organisation is indicated in the text with the use of bold and italics. The exegetical frame is marked with bold, and the inner embedded narrative is marked with italics. The latter begins with an explanatory

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men in the world. Her reward for this constancy is to have a clone of the Aśvins later as her husband. The motif resembles the narrative of the Wife of Bath in the *Canterbury tales* of Chaucer.

clause ("The head of the sacrifice that was missing is the sun, but it also the *pravargya*") which belongs to the exegetical frame. It comments the sacrifice that is illustrated by the narrative (the head of the sacrifice is *pravargya*) and it gives a symbolic explanation typical of the Vedic philosophy that sees correspondences everywhere (this head is also the sun). It is also metanarrative, as it explains the talk about heads in the narrative, even if it does not make clear why the changed head of Dadhyañc must come particularly from a horse (but this is mentioned already in the *Ṛgveda*, and also the cosmic correspondences could be well-known already[452]).

The embedded narrative has the same narrator (or narrative voice) as its frame, but a different origin, a different narrative world (the world of humans vs. the world of gods) and a different protagonist (Cyavana vs. the Aśvins) mark it as a separate narrative. In addition, there are mini-narratives (or sub-narratives) inside the two main narratives: Sukanyā's recognition of her husband among three men who have the same appearance[453], Cyavana's story about the sacrifice of gods and Dadhyañc, told to the Aśvins, and Dadhyañc's story about the threat of Indra. Witzel in his analysis includes the second of these to the embedded narrative[454]; moreover, he divides the embedded narrative into eight sections according to their narrative motifs and has pointed out that five of them are very probably copied from earlier sources.[455] They may be marked as fourth-level narratives, but because they can be said to be sub-stories only because of their origin, it is enough to show that there are at least three narrative levels that can be easily distinguished.

Below there are two diagrams that illustrate the complex structure of the narrative of Cyavana. The first (4a) is "generic": it gives the components that the author

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[452] There is connection to the *aśvamedha*, "horse sacrifice". In the beginning of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, an early text in its class, a cosmic *aśvamedha* is described in the style of the brāhmaṇas. In it the dawn, the rising of the sun in the east, the eastern direction and the beginning of every cycle: these all are the head of the horse.

[453] This episode, invented for this narrative (or copied from another story: the Nala legend in the *Mahābhārata* also contains a choice between similar-looking suitors), is not developed further: it is e.g. not told what the sign is that Cyavana uses.

[454] My choice to include it in the frame was that the main actor was Cyavana and the sphere of action was the human world. It is of course an addition to the older Cyavana story but still is a continuation of motif of the mutual pact between Cyavana and the Aśvins.

[455] These are IV: "Cyavana and Aśvins", V: "Cyavana (tells) about gods", VI: "Cyavana (tells) about Dadhyañc", VII: "Pravargya explanation", VIII: "Aśvins and Dadhyañc", IX: "Dadhyañc (tells) about Indra", X: "Aśvins and Dadhyañc" (= the change of heads and teaching of the secret), XI: "Dadhyañc and Indra" (= Indra cuts Dadhyañc's head off and the Aśvins restore his own head) and XII: "Aśvins and gods". By linguistic analysis (the use of older imperfect vs. new perfect in telling about ancient happenings) he proves that V, VI, IX, XI and XII have been lifted from pre-existing narratives. See Witzel 1987: 392-401.

of the *Brāhmaṇa* have used. The second (4b) is "analytic": it gives the narrative structure of the composite narrative. RV refers to the *Ṛgveda* and JB to the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*. It is to be noted that the boxes in these figures, as in the ones in the Diagrams 2 and 3 (p. 65, 67) mark framing structures of all kinds, not only "a story within a story". What kind of framing is used is explained in the text in each case.

Diagram 4a. The components of the narrative of Cyavana

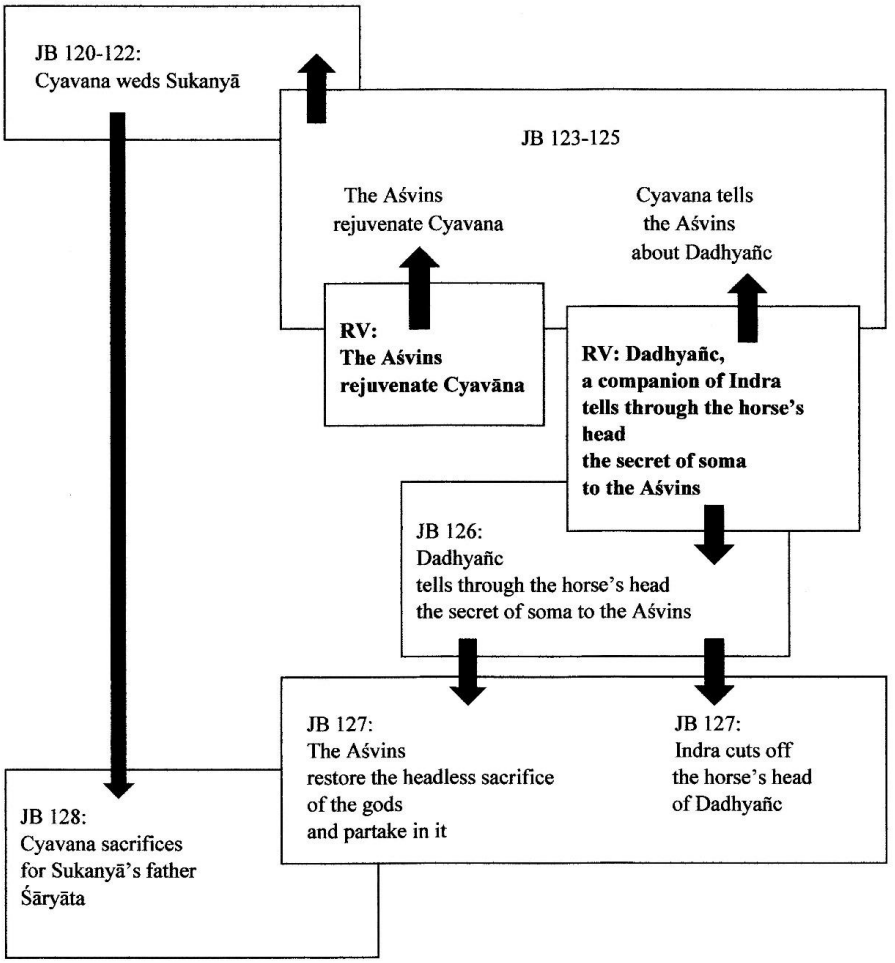
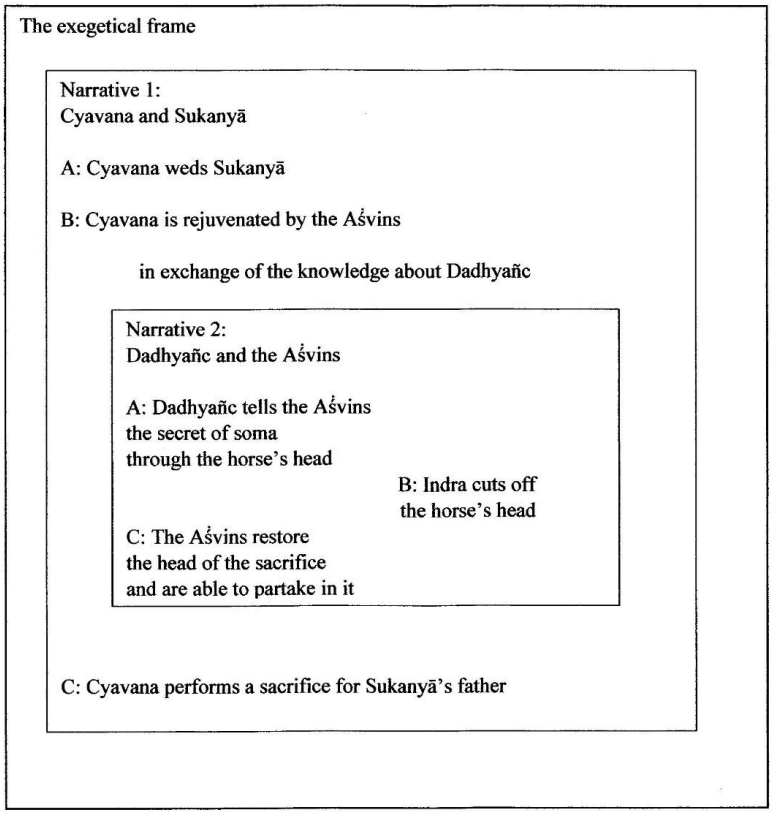


Diagram 4b. The structure of the narrative of Cyavana



The two separate strands of narrative in the *Ṛgveda* have offered the material for the episodes that make a new story in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*. The Aśvins rejuvenate Cyavana, as in the *Ṛgveda*, but they have not heard the secret of *soma*, and they are rewarded by Cyavana with the information that they should go to Dadhyañc to learn it. The reason for the change of heads is provided by the threat of Indra, which comes true by Indra cutting off the horse's head. But all ends well in the *Brāhmaṇa*: Dadhyañc get his own head back, the Aśvins get access to the soma sacrifice because of their new knowledge, and Cyavana has regained his youth and won a young beautiful wifeBoth the narrative of "Cyavana and Sukanyā" and the narrative of "Dadhyañc and the Aśvins" are told by the exegetical narrator, so inside the frame there actually is a horizontal

embedding. But as the second narrative is independent, put inside the first and takes place in a different world (the world of gods), it can be analysed as being inserted in between the two halves of the first narrative.

The *Jaiminīya* narrative of Cyavana has many other interesting features, but the analysis given above suffices for the purposes of this study. However, to finish this chapter, it is enlightening to take a quick look at the *Śatapatha* version for comparison. As said above, it is given in two parts. The differences between the versions are quite a many. The exegetical frame of the first part (IV.1.5.1-15) mentions the presentation of the Āśvina cups in the soma sacrifice and goes then to the narrative. In the beginning of the first narrative, Cyavana is not left behind by his sons but by his race, the Bhṛgus, or the Aṅgirases. These leave their kinsman on earth when they go to heaven. The cowherds of Śaryāta's (!) clan are playing near and pelt Cyavana with mud. Cyavana sows discord among the men of Śaryāta's clan so that they fight each other (whereas the *Jaiminīya* version refers to much more shameful behaviour). Śaryāta rushes to Cyavana with Sukanyā and gives his daughter to the old man without delay to appease him, and the curse is removed.

Then the Aśvins come and try to win Sukanyā, just like in the *Jaiminīya*. In this version Sukanyā takes a more active part in the negotiations: the Aśvins give her the advice to take her husband to a pool nearby to bathe in it. There is no recognition scene. Cyavana tells the Aśvins that they are incomplete because they cannot take part in the sacrifice of gods, which takes place in Kurukṣetra. He does not advise them to go to Dadhyañc. No, the Aśvins go straight to the sacrifice. After they announce that they know how to restore the headless sacrifice, they are invited to take part in it as the *adhvaryus*. The exegetical frame appears, tells that explanation of restoring the sacrifice is found "in the chapter of the *dīvakīrtyas*", and then goes on describing the ceremony at hand. However, there is a teaser some way ahead (IV.1.5.18.) saying "Dadhyañc, the son of Atharvan, taught to them the *Brāhmaṇa* called *madhu*" (i.e. the secret knowledge about *madhu*). For the rest one must go to a long way to the XIV.1.1.

There all the gods except the Aśvins are again performing the sacrifice in Kurukṣetra. In XIV.1.1.1-16 there is information about what happened in the sacrifice, about ants and Viṣṇu and other issues, nothing of which is connected to the story of Cyavana or the Aśvins. Not until XIV.1.1.17 it is told that the sacrifice is headless. 18-19 reveal that Dadhyañc, son of Atharvan, knew how the head of the sacrifice was restored, but Indra had said he should not tell it to anyone, or his head would be cut off. The Aśvins

have somehow overheard this conversation, and they had gone (apparently a long time before becoming involved with Cyavana) to Dadhyañc and said that they wanted to be his pupils (20-21). Dadhyañc tells them about Indra's threat, but they promise that they will protect him by changing his head for a horse's head (22-23). Dadhyañc teaches them, Indra cuts his head off and it is replaced as promised (24). The narrative ends with a quotation of the *Ṛgveda* I.116.12 about Dadhyañc telling the secret of *madhu* to the Aśvins through a horse's head (25). After a general warning that the ritual information must be kept secret from all others than those pupils one trusts, the exegetic frame starts to describe the *pravargya*.

As a composite narrative and a frame narrative the *Śatapatha* version is clearly less carefully executed than the *Jaiminīya* version. The two narratives are not integrated properly, maybe because the narratives were attached into two separate exegetical passages. The second narrative is presented twice, first time with one crucial piece of information missing, and in the second time the story of the Aśvins and Dadhyañc is told clumsily. Regarding the plot, it is much more clever to make Cyavana reveal who has the information that the Aśvins need, than tell that the Aśvins overheard the conversation of Dadhyañc and Indra and, apparently for the fun of it, wanted to learn the secret of the head of the sacrifice — and only after Cyavana had told what they lacked, realized how they could use this information. All this undermines the logic of the narrative.

The first narrative is also less interesting in the *Śatapatha*. Cyavana does not emerge as a resourceful man in spite of his old age, as in the *Jaiminīya*. His three wishes are lacking, as the many other ingenious details that both sharpen the narrative style and add cohesion in the other version. In the *Śatapatha* the first narrative does not form any frame, but the two (or three) stories are presented simply one after another. The idea of combining the narratives because of the ritual considerations is there, but the merging has not been executed as thoughtfully and carefully in the *Jaiminīya*. The narrative of Cyavana in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* shows how competent and experienced the composers were in taking older narrative material from various sources and welding the pieces together. An important fact is that they used the exegetic text as a frame inside which they could gather Vedic narratives and retell them to both make them logical and whole and make them fit the new context.

2.3.3. The narrative of Śunaḥśepa

The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* VII.

13. Hariścandra Vaidhasa, from the clan of Ikṣvākus[456], was without a son. He had a hundred wives, but he did not get a son. Parvata and Nārada[457] lived in his house. He asked Nārada:

"Because men want to have sons, both those who know and those who do not know,
why does a man need a son? Tell me this, Nārada."

Asked a question by one verse, he answered with ten:

"With him [the son] he [the father] pays a debt, and attains immortality.
A father who sees the face of a son that is born living,
the joys of the earth, the joys of the fire,
the joys of water for the living beings, the joy of a father for a son is greater than these.
By means of a son have fathers always passed over deep darkness.
The self is born from the self: the son is (a ship) which is steady to steer over.
What is the use of dirt, or the goatskin, or long hair, or austerity?
Strive for a son, o Brahmans, this is the advice given by the world.
Food is breath, clothes protection, gold is beauty, cows help to marry,
a wife is a comrade, a daughter an ailment, and a son a light in the highest heaven.
The father enters a wife, as an embryo he enters the mother,
She becomes the earth, where the seed is lain down.
She is called *jananī*[458] because from her he is born again,
She engenders, he engenders, the seed is hidden in them.
The gods and the seers produced her as a great shining light,
The gods said to men. "This is you mother, returning to you."
"Without a son one cannot attain heaven": all creatures know this.
This is why a son mounts his mother and his sister.
This is the broad, auspicious way that men with sons walk free from pain;
Beasts and herds long for it; because of it they even unite with their mother."

This is what he [Nārada] told him [Hariścandra].

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[456] Ikṣvākus are not mentioned until the late Vedic period. They are prominent as kings of Kośala in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Purāṇas*.

[457] These are ancient wise men. Some Vedic verses are attributed to Nārada, but most of all he is known (often accompanied by Parvata) to act as a messenger between gods and humans, or a wise counsellor, as in this narrative. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* he gives inspiration to he poet Vālmīki. In the *Mahābhārata* Nārada appears both in the main story and the embeddings: he is e.g. the one who foresees the future of the husband of Sāvitrī in the narrative that bears her name. He acts as a counsellor of a king in other narratives, and much of the proverbial *śloka* and *gāthā* literature is attributed to him. See Horsch 1966: 368.

[458] *Jananī*, "wife", means literally "she who makes one born".

14. Then he [Nārada] said to him: “Turn to the king Varuṇa [and say:] ‘Let me have a son: I will make a sacrifice to you with him.’” “So be it.” He went to the king Varuṇa [and said:] “Let me have a son: I will make a sacrifice to you with him.” “So be it.” A son was born to him, he was given name Rohita. He [Varuṇa] said to him [Hariścandra]: “A son was born to you: sacrifice to me with him.” He said: “When the victim is over ten days old, it is fit for sacrifice. Let him be over ten days old, then let me make a sacrifice to you with him.” “So be it.” He became over ten days old. He [Varuṇa] said to him [Hariścandra]: “He has become over ten days old: sacrifice to me with him.” He said: “When the teeth of the victim appear, it is fit for sacrifice. Let his teeth appear, then let me make a sacrifice to you with him.” “So be it.” His teeth appeared. [Varuṇa] said to him [Hariścandra]: “His teeth have appeared: sacrifice to me with him.” He said: “When the teeth of the victim fall, it is fit for sacrifice. Let his teeth fall, then let me make a sacrifice to you with him.” “So be it.” His teeth fell. [Varuṇa] said to him [Hariścandra]: “His teeth have fallen: sacrifice to me with him.” He said: “When the teeth of the victim appear again, it is fit for sacrifice. Let his teeth appear again, then let me make a sacrifice to you with him.” “So be it.” His teeth appeared again. [Varuṇa] said to him [Hariścandra]: His teeth have appeared again: sacrifice to me with him.” He said: “When a kṣatriya[459] is fit to bear arms, he is fit for sacrifice. Let him become fit to bear arms, then let me make a sacrifice to you with him.” “So be it.” He was fit to bear arms. [Varuṇa] said to him [Hariścandra]: “He is fit to bear arms: sacrifice to me with him.” “So be it”, he said and spoke to him [Rohita]: “My child, this one [Varuṇa] gave you to me. So, I will sacrifice to him with you.” “No”, he said, and took his bow and went to the forest; and he wandered there in the forest for a year.

15. Then Varuṇa seized the Ikṣvāku. His belly swelled [with dropsy].[460] Rohita heard about this, and he went from the forest to a village. Indra approached him in a human form and said:

“He who toils will prosper: this we have heard, o Rohita!

He who stays with men is evil, but Indra is the companion of those who wander.

So go on wandering!” “This Brahman has told me to wander!” [he thought and] wandered for a second year in the forest. He went from the forest to the village. Again Indra approached him in a human form and said:

“Flowers bloom under the heels of those who wander, his body grows and bears fruit;

All his sins lie low, killed by the toil of his wandering.

So go on wandering!” “This Brahman has told me to wander!” [he thought and] wandered for a third year in the forest. He went from the forest to the village. Again Indra approached him in a human form and said:

“The luck of that man who sits down will go down, the luck of him who stands up will go up;

The luck of him who lies still will stay still, the luck of him that moves will move.

So go on wandering!” “This Brahman has told me to wander!” [he thought and] wandered for a fourth year in the forest. He went from the forest to the village. Again Indra approaced him in a human form and said:

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[459] A kṣatriya is a member of the class of soldiers, nobles and kings.

[460] Varuṇa was the guardian of cosmic order and true speech, and punished those who broke their vow with dropsy (Varuṇa’s fetter).

"He who lies down gets *kali*,[461] he who rises up gets *dvāpara*,

tretā for him who stands straight, and *kṛta* for him who moves on.

So go on wandering!" "This Brahman has told me to wander!" [he thought and] wandered for a fifth year in the forest. He went from the forest to the village. Again Indra approached him in a human form and said:

"He who wander finds honey; he who wander gets the sweet *udumbara*[462] fruit;

Look at the splendour of the [circling] sun who never gets weary of wandering.

So go on wandering!" "This Brahman has told me to wander!" [he thought and] wandered for a sixth year in the forest. There in the forest he found Ajīgarta Sauyavasi, who was a seer and afflicted with hunger. He had three sons, Śunaḥpuccha, Śunaḥśepa and Śunolāṅgūla.[463] He [Rohita] said to him [Ajīgarta]: "Seer, I give you a hundred [cows]: let me release myself with one of these [boys]." He [Ajīgarta] held back the eldest son and said: "Not this one." "Not this one", [said] the mother, [holding back] the youngest son. They made an agreement about the middle one, Śunaḥśepa. He [Rohita] gave a hundred for him, took him and came from the forest to the village. He went to his father and said: "Dear father, come and let me release myself with this one." He [Hariścandra] went to king Varuṇa [and said:] "Let me sacrifice to you with this one." [Varuṇa said:] "Be it so. A brahman is worth more than a kṣatriya." He announced a sacrifial rite, a *rājasūya*[464], that was to be held for him [Hariścandra]. On the day of the [royal] consecration he took the man for the victim.

16. Viśvāmitra was the hotar for him, Jamadagni the adhvaryu, Vasiṣṭha the brahman priest, and Ayāsya the udgātar.[465] When he was brought up [to be killed], they could not find anybody to bind him. Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said: "Give me a hundred more, and I shall bind him." They give him a hundred more, and he bound him. When he was brough up, and bound, and the Āprī verses[466] receited and the fire carried round

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[461] *Kali*, *dvāpara*, *tretā* and *kṛta* are the four throws of the Indian game of dice. *Kali* is the lowest and *kṛta* highest. They are also the names of cyclically recurring cosmic ages that deteriorate towards the Kali Age (in which we are living now). The game of dice has been popular from Vedic times (cf. the hymn "Gambler's lament") and it belongs to certain rituals, e.g. the *rājasūya* (see n. 396 below).

[462] *Udumbara* is a species of a fig tree.

[463] These names are quite unsuitable for those whose ancestors are Aṅgirases, the race of divine seers and priests. Aṅgirases were associated with both Indra and Agni. The first part of the three names means "a dog" (śvan-/ śuna-) and the second part "a tail", which is an euphemism for a penis. The boys' names reflect the economically and morally low state in which their father lives. His son refers to his "śūdra ways": he behaves like a low-caste person. For the many meanings of "dog" (also the connection to the game of dice) in this narrative see Hämeen-Anttila 2001: 196, n. 59-64. Ajīgarta bears also an anomalous patronymic: he is a son of Suyavas ("he who has good grainfields") but is starving.

[464] A *rājasūya* is a Vedic ritual in which the king is anointed. This does not happen necessarily when one becomes a king, but later. Its purpose is to win the king an eternal life by affirming his connection with his son. In this narrative this seems to be achieved by sacrificing the son (or his surrogate). The story of the Śunaḥśepa is inserted in the ritual of *rājasūya* (see below).

[465] For hotar etc. see p. 88 n.367. - These persons are mythical seers and poets of Vedic or late Vedic age. For Vasiṣṭha see pp. 48-50 above. Viśvāmitra, who commands the rivers in the hymn III.33, is an authoritative figure and a subject of many tales in later literature. He was born in a family of kings, but achieved the status of a seer by his ascetic powers, thus becoming a royal seer. In Epic mythology he is known for his enmity with Vasiṣṭha and his grim nature. His name, though, means "everybody's friend". See Hopkins 1986 (1915): 179-181.

[466] These were formulaic "hymns of propitiation" that evoked eleven special deities in auspicious moments. They were used in animal sacrifices when the victim was bound to the sacrificial post, like in this narrative.

him, they could not find anybody to kill him. Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said: "Give me a hundred more, and I shall kill him." They give him a hundred more, and he came to him, whetting his knife. Then Śunaḥśepa thought: "They want to kill me, as if I were not a man. How now, let me appeal to the gods!" He appealed first to Prajāpati[467] with the verse: "***The name of which god, of which of the immortals***?"[468] Prajāpati said to him: "Agni is the nearest of the gods: appeal to him!" He appealed to Agni with the verse: "***We recall the name of Agni, the first of the immortals***."[469] Agni said to him: "Savitṛ[470] is the One who impels; appeal to him!" He appealed to Savitṛ with the three verses [beginning]: "***O god Savitṛ, we implore you***."[471]. Savitṛ said to him: " You are bound to the king Varuṇa: appeal to him!" He appealed to the king Varuṇa with ***the next thirty-one verses***.[472] Varuṇa said to him: "Agni is the first of the gods: appeal to him!" He praised Agni with ***the following twenty-two verses***.[473] Agni said to him: "Praise the All-gods, then we shall deliver you." He praised the All-gods with the verse: "***Reverence to the great ones and reverence to the small***!"[474] The All-gods said to him: "Indra is the mightiest, strongest, most powerful, most real and most able of the gods: praise him and we shall deliver you." He praised Indra with the hymn [beginning] "***Even when, o you true drinker of soma***"[475] and with the fifteen verses of the following [hymn].[476] The praise delighted Indra's mind, and he gave him a golden chariot. He glorified him with the verse "***Again and again Indra***".[477] Indra said to him: "Praise the Aśvins, then we shall deliver you." He praised the Aśvins with ***the next three verses***.[478] The Aśvins said to him: "Praise Uṣas[479], then we shall deliver you." He praised Uṣas with ***the next three verses***.[480] As these verses came from his mouth, his bonds were loosened, the belly of the son of Ikṣvāku became smaller; and when the last verse was recited, the [last] bond fell off and the son of Ikṣvāku was free from the disease.

17. (a)[481] The priests said to him: "You are the one who presides the sacrifice today." Then Śunaḥśepa saw the quick pressing [of *soma*].[482] And he pressed with these four verses: **"*You, in house after house*".[483]** Then he took it to the wooden vessel with the verse: **"*Bring what is left over into two wooden cups*."**[484] Then, as he took hold of it, he offered with the preceding four verses[485], calling out "Hail". Then

[467] Prajāpati is the Vedic creator-god. Later he was merged with Brahma.
[468] The *Ṛgveda* I.24.1.
[469] The *Ṛgveda* I.24.2.
[470] Savitṛ: see p. 57 n. 228.
[471] The *Ṛgveda* I.24.3-5.
[472] The *Ṛgveda* I.24.6-15, I.25.1-21.
[473] The *Ṛgveda* I.26., I.27.1-12.
[474] The *Ṛgveda* I.27.13.
[475] The *Ṛgveda* I.29.
[476] The *Ṛgveda* I.30.1-15.
[477] The *Ṛgveda* I.30.16.
[478] The *Ṛgveda* I.30.17-19.
[479] Uṣas is the goddess of dawn.
[480] The *Ṛgveda* I.30.20-22.
[481] The division to (a) and (b) sections is mine.
[482] *Añjaḥsava* in the text. This is a short sacrifice which Śunaḥśepa invents on the spot.
[483] The *Ṛgveda* I.28.5-8.
[484] The *Ṛgveda* I.28.9.
[485] The *Ṛgveda* I.28.1-4.

he took the final bath with the two [verses]: **"*You, Agni, knowing one*"**.[486] Next he paid reverence to the *āhavanīya*[487] with **"*Śunaḥśepa, from his thousand [bonds*]"**[488].

(b) Then Śunaḥśepa sat on the lap of Viśvāmitra. Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said : "Seer, give me back my son." "No", said Viśvāmitra. "the gods have given him to me." **He was Devarāta Vaiśvāmitra[489], and his descendants are the Kāpileyas and the Babhravas.[490]** Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said: "Now, we must persuade him." Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said:

"You are from the clan of Aṅgiras by birth, a famous seer, the son of Ajīgarta;
Do not adandon your ancestry: O seer, return to me."

Śunaḥśepa said:

"They have seen you knife in your hand, something unheard of even among śūdras;
More than me you desired three hundred cows, o Aṅgiras."

Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said:

"My dear, I repent that heinous thing that I did,
and I want you to forget it: those three hundred cows are yours."

Śunaḥśepa said:

"He who once does and evil deed, does it again;
You have not cast off your śūdra ways: what you did is unforgivable."

At the word "unforgivable" Viśvāmitra joined in. Viśvāmitra said:

"Horrible indeed was Sauyavasi as he stood knife in his hand
and ready to kill: be not his son, but become a son of mine."

Śunaḥśepa said:

"After having approached us like this, o son of a king[491],
Please tell how I can be your son, for I am an Aṅgiras."

Viśvāmitra said:

"You shall be the eldest of my sons, your offspring will have the highest place.
I beg you to accept [also] my divine inheritance."

Śunaḥśepa said:

"Ask also these [your sons] to agree to be my friends and wish me good;
so that I, o bull of the Bharatas[492], may become your son."

Then Viśvāmitra said to his sons:

"Hear, Madhucchandas[493], and you, Ṛṣabha, Reṇu, Aṣṭaka;

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[486] The *Ṛgveda* IV.4-5.
[487] The *āhavanīya* is one of the three sacrificial fires that are used in the rituals. It is placed on the eastern part of the sacrificial ground. It is the one which carries the offering to the gods in heaven. I will not go to the particulars of the ritual that Śunaḥśepa performs for Hariścandra as it is not important to this study.
[488] The *Ṛgveda* V.2.7.
[489] Devarāta means "given by god". Vaiśvāmitra is patronymic and means "the son of Viśvāmitra".
[490] The clans of Kapila and Babhru.
[491] See n. 397 above.
[492] Bharatas are the semi-mythical clan who are considered to be the first kings of India. The plot of the *Mahābhārata* tells about the Bharatas. It is remarkable that Viśvāmitra is both a seer and a king: he has "double inheritance".
[493] Madhucchandas Vaiśvāmitra (the son of Viśvāmitra) is mentioned as a poet in the *Ṛgveda* (the composer of the hymns I.1-11).

and all your brothers: do accept his [Śunaḥśepa's] pre-eminence."

18. Viśvāmitra had a hundred and one sons, of whom fifty were older than Madhucchandas and fifty were younger. Those who were older did not accept what was said. He [Viśvāmitra] cursed them [saying]: "Your offspring shall have no inheritance." These are the Andhras, Puṇḍras, Śabaras, Pulindas and Mūtibas[494], whose hordes live beyound the borders: most of the Dasyus[495] are the descendants of Viśvāmitra. Madhucchandas and the other fifty sons said:

"What out father has decided that we must accept;
we all bow to you and shall come after you."

Then Viśvāmitra was pleased, and he praised his sons:

"My sons, you shall be rich in cattle and have heroes as your offspring;
you who by bending to my will have made me father of heroic sons.
With a hero to lead you; this Devarāta, o Gāthinas[496],
You shall be prosperous, my sons: he shall seek the truth for you.
This is your hero, o Kuśikas[497], Devarāta: you must follow him,
From me he shall inherit you, and all the knowledge that we possess."
In concord all these sons of Viśvāmitra together, the Gāthinas,
accepted rejoicing the lead of Devarāta and his superiority.
So Devarāta, the sage, was given both inheritances:
The lordship of the Jahnus[498] and the sacred lore of the Gāthinas.

This is the story[499] of Śunaḥśepa, with a hundred verses from the *Ṛgveda*, and *gāthās*.[500] The hotar tells this story to the king after the anointing. He tells it seated on a golden cushion: seated on a golden cushion he [adhvaryu] responds: gold is glory, truly thus he makes him prosper and be glorious. "Oṃ" is the response for a *ṛc*-verse; "So be it" for a *gāthā*; oṃ is divine, "so be it" human: truly thus with what is divine and what is human he [the hotar] frees him [the king] from evil and from sin. This is why a victorious king shall make him tell him this story of Śunaḥśepa, even when he is not sacrificing, and not the tiniest stain of sin will be left in him. A thousand shall he give to the narrator, a hundred to him who makes the response; the seats and the chariot with the white

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[494] These are names of tribes that live in the eastern and southern borders of the "civilized world" that was the valleys of Ganges and Godavarī west of Bihar and north of Mahārāṣṭra.
[495] *Dasyu* is a general term for those people who the *Āryas* ("us", "the decent people"). Dasyus were considered to be of a lower race and the natural enemies of the Āryas. See Parpola 1988.
[496] *Gāthin* is a composer and preserver of *Gāthās* and a preserver of sacred lore (see n. 500 below).
[497] Kuśika is Viśvāmitra's ancestor. In this story there are references to the clan of Viśvāmitra, but the genealogy is developed fully only in the *Mahābhārata*.
[498] Jahnu is another ancestor of Viśvāmitra.
[499] The word for "story" is here *ākhyāna*. See p. 84 n. 350.
[500] *Gāthās* ("songs") are stanzas of Vedic age that do not belong to the Vedic collection (= ṛc-verses). They are included in the prose portions of those *Brāhmaṇas* that are later than the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*. They represent older non-Vedic traditions and lost bardic poetry that precedes the compilation of the *Mahābhārata*. The same word is used of Avestan sacred poems. The most comprehensive study of the *gāthās* is Horsch 1966.

mule to the hotar. Those who want to have sons should also have it narrated: thus they obtain sons.[501]

The ritual of *rājasūya*, the royal consecration, is both the extra-textual frame and the innermost core of the narrative of Śunaḥśepa. [502] Thus the framing occurs both on a practical and a textual level. The narrative is to be actually narrated in the middle of the *rājasūya* ritual when it is performed: there the narrator is the main priest, the narratee the king. The narrative is positioned, however, into a different place in different texts. In this version, that of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the narrative is presented first, before describing the ritual in the middle of which it occurs.[503] In the end of the narrative there is a passage by the (exegetical) narrator of the frame, telling the right ritual moment and the right manner to tell this story to the king. In the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra* the narrative has been inserted in the text without any mention of its connection to the rite (15.17-27).[504] The reason for this is apparently the different nature of the framing texts. The *Śāṅkhāyana* is a practical handbook for the priests, the *Aitareya* an exegetical work that explains the meanings and connections of various parts of the ritual.[505]

The double frame for both oral and textual narrating is intriguing. It is probable that this version of the narrative of Śunaḥśepa was put together only when this late *Brāhmaṇa* text was composed, to be narrated in this particular formal and elevated situation. This has contributed to its solemn style and carefully crafted structure.[506] Each of the three successive sequences contains an independent narrative, but the two outer

[501] In the text of the narrative the narrative proper is unmarked throughout, but its layers and levels are discussed in the analysis. The frame is marked with bold and the Ṛgvedic quotations with bold italic, as before.
[502] I have discussed elsewhere (Hämeen-Anttila 2001) the ritualistic and ideological background of the Śunaḥśepa narrative, so I touch it here only when it is relevant to the structural analysis. See especially Weber 1893; Oldenberg 1911, 1917; Weller 1956: Horsch 1966; Falk 1984; White 1986; and Shulman 1993. The 2001 article contains a fuller bibliography of the many studies devoted to the narrative.
[503] In the *rājasūya* the narrative of Śunaḥśepa is read between rituals of "the sham cow raid" and "the game of dice".
[504] In 16.11.1. it is recommended, however, that the story should be read in *puruṣamedha*, "human sacrifice". The *Śāṅkhāyana* version is almost similar to the *Aitareya* version. The few changes indicate that it is somewhat later.
[505] The story is included only in these two texts but it is mentioned in the *Baudhāyana*, *Kātyāyana* and *Mānava Śrautasūtras* as being a part of the *rājasūya*.
[506] The situation is somewhat complicated by the fact that the *rājasūya* described in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* is different from the description in the other *Brāhmaṇas*, which do not give the narrative either (which is, however, found in the *Śāṅkhāyana Śrautasūtra*, as explained above). This particular ritual with the inserted story seems to have been adopted only by the texts and ritualists belonging to the Ṛgvedic *śākhās*.

sequences support the middle sequence from both sides like a frame and the three sequences work as a continuous whole.

The first sequence (13) - (15) concerns Hariścandra's vow to sacrifice his son to Varuṇa and its consequences. The third sequence (17(b)) - (18) tells how Śunaḥśepa was adopted by Viśvāmitra and was born again, after his ritual rebirth, as Devarāta. The middle sequence (16) - (17(a)) is thematically the most important and also the core and the starting point of the composite narrative. It contains the same ritual (*rājasūya*) into which the narrative is embedded both textually and extra-textually.

The two outer sequences can be divided further into separate sections. The first one has the sub-narratives of (i) Hariścandra and Varuṇa, (ii) Rohita and Indra, and (iii) Rohita and Ajīgarta. The sections (i) and (ii) contain metrical passages, the *gāthās* of Nārada and the *gāthās* of Indra. (i) and (ii) have other common features too: they both have a repetive chain of events (and phrases) that signify postponing the inevitable sacrifice of a human victim. Hariścandra bargains with Varuṇa by putting five times a later date for the sacrifice of his son, until the last condition (that the boy is fit to carry arms) is met. In the section (ii) Rohita wanders in the forest and, returning to the village after a year, is five times turned back by the god Indra to wander a year more, until he decides to find a surrogate victim.

The section (iii) of the first sequence is different: there are no *gāthās*, and the prose adopts a quicker pace. The episode with the three sons and the choice of their father to spare the oldest and their mother to spare the youngest looks like motif of a folktale, as in the story of Ekata, Dvita and Treta in pp. 84-87 above.[507] This section functions as a bridge between the narrative of Hariścandra and his son and the middle sequence, as it introduces, at last, the protagonist of the composite narrative: Śunaḥśepa.

After Rohita has brought the surrogate victim to his father, he is safe and vanishes from the text. Hariścandra is supposed to be present in the *rājasūya* but he does not play an active role any more: he is mentioned only in the end of (16) when, after Śunaḥśepa's praying, his swollen belly gets smaller until he is cured. After this he too disappears[508]. The composite story diminishes the king and elevates the priest and the seer.

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[507] The motif of promising one's child to a god,a spirit or a demon is another folktale element in this narrative.

[508] Because of this shift of Hariścandra from the protagonist (section (i)) to a statist and the total disappearance of Rohita I take the stand that "The story of Hariścandra and Rohita" ends with the conlusion of section (i).

The *gāthās* of Nārada in the beginning of the narrative are clearly a secondary embedding. They are general gnomic verses about the necessity to have sons and do not contribute to the plot of the narrative. (But they have a lot to do with the *meaning* of the whole narrative, though.) The verses of Indra are different in that they provide a plot element to the passage where Rohita, wanting to go back to save his father, is hindered by Indra. The verses themselves do not tell any story, though: they simply glorify the life of the wandering ascetic. Compared to Nārada's pious verses they have a light, worldly flavour.

The third, conluding narrative sequence begins with the clause "Then Śunaḥśepa sat on the lap of Viśvāmitra". This signifies the end of the sacrifice, and the action leaves the sacrificial ground as well as the king and his son for good and concentrates on the adoption and the new identity of Śunaḥśepa. This part can be also divided into three sections. The first one contains the attempt by Ajīgarta to win back his son. He and Śunaḥśepa have a short dialogue in the form of *gāthās*. After Ajīgarta is rejected by both Śunaḥśepa and Viśvāmitra, a dialogue of the latter two begins the second section. Again the conversation proceeds with the *gāthās*. Viśvāmitra tells what Śunaḥśepa will be and what he will inherit, and then gives a command to his hundred and one sons to make way for the adopted son. An interlude in prose tells how the older sons, being disobedient, are cursed by their father to become forefathers of barbarous tribes. Then the *gāthās* continue and tell the happy ending of the story: the middle son Madhucchandas obeys their father with the younger sons, and Viśvāmitra blesses them, praises Śunaḥśepa-Devarāta and tells about his double inheritance, the kingly family and the sacred lore of the Vedic seers. The two last *gāthās* which summarize the preceding section belong to the narrator of the story.

In addition, there is an exegetical frame, marked in this text with bold lettering. It describes when and how the story of Śunaḥśepa will be narrated within the *rājasūya* ceremony. Earlier in the text there is a clause that anticipates the events that come after and confirms the changed position of Śunaḥśepa: this also belongs to the exegetical frame, as it does not narrate but explains what is narrated.

The *gāthās* of the last sequence are not of general nature and taken from some common source of gnomic stanzas, as those in the first sequence. They carry on the plot and are composed specifically for the narrative of Śunaḥśepa, either for the present version of it, or for some earlier version. They could have been borrowed from a separate

narrative that tells the story of Śunaḥśepa and Viśvāmitra, but it is not very likely (see below).

The sequence in the middle is the centre of the composite narrative. It is different from the other two sequences. Like the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it mixes a new narrative with quotatations from the *Ṛgveda*. Here the hymns with which Śunaḥśepa, bound to the sacrificial post to be killed, turns to different gods (I.24, I.26, I.27, I,28 and I.30), are those that in the Ṛgvedic corpus are attributed to him. On the other hand, the stanza of the hymn to Agni which he uses last (V.2.7), when he after being freed conducts the sacrifice, is not attributed to him but refers to his story: "You released even Śunaḥśepa, who was bound, from his thousand [bonds], from the sacrificial post, since he [prayed] with all his might."[509]

The use of these Ṛgvedic hymns is a violation of narrative time. How can the boy quote hymns that he will compose only later, supposedly as a grown man? And how can Śunaḥśepa quote a hymn by another poet (V.2.) which tells about the freeing of Śunaḥśepa as something that has already happened in the time of composing the hymn, when it does not happen until now (i.e. in the "present time" of the narrative)? The first question could be countered by saying that the narrative does not take place in the age of the *Brāhmaṇas*, but in a much earlier Vedic period, and in this context the hymns to the gods by Śunaḥśepa need not to be old: this (the present time of the narrative) may be the very moment when Śunaḥśepa is inspired to compose them.

The second question cannot be explained as easily. The seer responsible of the hymn V.2. "knows" the narrative of Śunaḥśepa before it has happened, and Śunaḥśepa can refer to an old legend that tells of himself. However, there is nothing to worry. We have already seen that there are metalepses all over the *Brāhmaṇas*, when the narrator-commentators leap into the world of *Ṛgveda*, or into the world of the ritual, and back to the narrative, explaining what that event there or this clause here actually means. Self-referentiality is inherent in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa: there is a *rājasūya* inside a narrative that is narrated inside a text which says that the narrative has to be narrated in the middle of a *rājasūya*. The narrators also feel free to jump around from one level to another, because they tell about the world of "mythological time" in which thousand-

[509] The subject of the hymn V.2. is the disappearance of Agni, the sacrificial fire and the priest of the gods. Agni is afraid and hidden himself, and rituals become impossible without him. Indra instructs the poet-sacrificer who succeeds in calling Agni back. The poet persuades Agni by referring to the god's previous good deed of releasing "even Śunaḥśepa".

year-old seers and demigods live and speak and human beings converse with gods like Varuṇa and Indra.[510] Same kind of metaleptic Moebius bands are frequent in the *Mahābhārata*.

As in the narrative of Cyavana, it is enlightening to know from where the parts of the narrative of Śunaḥśepa come from. The earliest source for the whole narrative are the Vedic stanzas of the middle sequence. The stanza V.2.7. contains the core of the narrative just as the I.116.10. (or V.74.5.) contains the core of the story of Cyavana. Somebody called Śunaḥśepa was bound with thousand bonds to a sacrificial post, to be offered as a human victim, but he was released by Agni after he had prayed to the god with all his might. One of Śunaḥśepa's own hymns (I.24.13.) refers also to the story: "Since Śunaḥśepa, who was seized and bound in three stocks, called upon the Āditya (= Varuṇa), the king Varuṇa should set him free. Let him, the wise one who never cheats, release the fetters."

The motif of a human being serving as a sacrificial victim may indicate that the story is ancient. A sacrifice of a human victim (*puruṣamedha*) is included in the old rituals but excepting this narrative, there is no detailed description of it or any evidence that it was ever executed. Still there is a possibility that it is a pre-Vedic custom that the Vedic sources did not feel free to discuss. A theory for this motif has been suggested already by Hillebrandt[511]: he linked the sacrifice of Śunaḥśepa to the Hariścandra story, just as the narrative does, and proposed that there once was a ritual where the king offered his first-born son, perhaps by replacing him with a surrogate.[512] The message of the narrative of Śunaḥśepa would then be the repudiation of such a barbarous habit. The fact that the god that demands the sacrifice is Varuṇa and the god that tries to sabotage it is Indra seems to reflect a conflict between older and younger Vedic gods in the narrative.[513] Here I do not go deeper to this interpretation: it is enough conclude that the *story* of this kind of sacrifice

[510] In the narratives it is not described how this interaction happens. The gods and humans seem to discuss like human beings in general. Apparently the *topos* is so well-known that it needs no explanation. We may assume that the god reveals himself to the human being to influence what happens on earth. They may be also evoked by rituals.
[511] Hillebrandt 1980 (1927,1929) II: 15-16, 298 n. 109.
[512] Many studies has been written especially in the end of the 19th century (e.g. *The Golden Bough* by James Frazer) about the ancient rites of sacrificing a king or his surrogate for the good of his people, to appease the gods or ensure the harvest. For the king offering his first-born as the offering of "first fruit", see Horsch 1966: 286-287. The sacrifice of one's son to god is a well-known motif in many literatures. There is not much direct evidence of this, however. For human sacrifices see Bremmer 2007 (for Vedic India, see the article by Asko Parpola in this volume).
[513] I have elaborated this theory in 2001: 188-190, 191-195.

in which Śunaḥśepa was the protagonist was old and well-known at the time of the *Ṛgveda*, and it was taken as the starting-point of the narrative in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.

As seen above, in addition to a hymn which refers to the binding and the release of Śunaḥśepa there are hymns in the *Ṛgveda* that have been attributed to Śunaḥśepa, son of Ajīgarta (1.24-30). They are directed to many gods, so when they were fitted into the middle sequence, it was not enough that Śunaḥśepa would pray to Agni (like in V.2.7), who will eventually release him, or Varuṇa (like in I.24.13), to whom he is to be offered, but he had to approach all the gods that were recipients of his Ṛgvedic hymns. This means a longish delay in the action, but as the narrative is rather grave and hieratic in style, this is not a great flaw.

The Vedic hymns provide the backbone for the part of the narrative in which Śunaḥśepa prays the gods and is set free. Nothing is said in the *Ṛgveda*, however, about why and how he got to be bound in the sacrificial post, and what happened after his release. The seer Viśvāmitra is mentioned many times in the *Ṛgveda*, also as the author of the 3rd book of hymns, but never in connection with Śunaḥśepa. Hariścandra does not appear in the *Ṛgveda* at all. In a later Vedic text which partly precedes the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, namely the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, it is told (V.2.1.3.) that Śunaḥśepa, the son of Ajīgarta Āṅgirasa, was seized by Varuṇa, but released after praying to the god with the self-referring verse I.24.13. Here Varuṇa is mentioned, but he seizes Śunaḥśepa, not Hariścandra. The reason for the seizing is not given, but Varuṇa is easily provoked, as shown in the Varuṇa-Vasiṣṭha hymn VII.86 above (pp. 53-55).

In sources that are roughly contemporary with the *Aitareya*[514] there are familiar names and motifs, but no direct connection to the narrative of Śunaḥśepa. In the *Maitrāyanī Upaniṣad* Hariścandra is listed among the *cakravartins* (legendary world-ruling kings). In the *Mahābhārata* he is mentioned as a pious king who performed a *rājasūya* and was raised to the heaven of Indra. But the epic has the tale of the king Somaka (*Āraṇyakaparvan*, 127-128), who sacrifices his only son Jantu and thus obtains a hundred sons. There is no surrogate or tragedy, because Jantu is reborn as the eldest of sons. Further, in the Epic Viśvāmitra competes and quarrels with Vasiṣṭha and causes his rival's sons to be eaten, but he does not do anything to his own sons or adopt anybody.

[514] The dating of the later part of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* is around 600-500 BCE which puts it in the textual world of late *Upaniṣads*. At this time a great mass of popular tales, some very old and some younger, must have been in circulation. Many of them were absorbed both in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Jātakas*.

There are, though, other angry fathers: the mythical king Yayāti and the Bhārgava seer Jamadagni, a relative of Viśvāmitra, both curse their sons when they show disobedience. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* the narrative appears in an altered and truncated form: it is discussed below (pp. 133-134).

The Buddhist *Jātakas* contain many stories of kings who perform human sacrifices to save their own life, to avoid life in hell or to attain the bliss of heaven. In some occasions the victim is the king's son. In the *Khaṇḍahālajātaka* (no. 542) the noble prince Candakumāra offers himself as a substitute victim when the king is persuaded to sacrifice his other sons, his queens and also his best bulls and steeds. In the *Jātakas* there are also many fathers who want to kill their sons only because they regard them as their rivals.[515] This motif can be seen in the father-and-son antagonism in each of the three sequences in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa. Hariścandra wants a son so badly that he promises to sacrifice Rohita, Ajīgarta is so greedy that he sells Śunaḥśepa to be sacrificed and is willing to do the killing himself, and Viśvāmitra is so autocratic and irate that he curses half of his sons and their offspring to be outcasts and barbarous tribes when they do not obey him at once.

This shows that some motifs that appear in contemporary or somewhat later narratives are found also in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa. Even so, as in the narrative of Cyavana, there is no clear antecedent in which all three sequences appear fully developed and in connection to each other. There is no story about the king Hariścandra and his son Rohita before the *Aitareya* narrative. The story of Jantu may have been a subtext in some form, but it has a different setting and a different outcome. As there is no connection between Viśvāmitra and Śunaḥśepa in other early sources, it can be concluded that the third sequence ("The adoption") is an independent composition of the author(s) of the *Aitareya* narrative.[516]

So the narrative of the *Aitareya* would be an original text that was essentially built around the fragmentary story given in the stanzas of the *Ṛgveda* or around a more complete story that belonged to the oral narrative tradition. Here, again, the technique of

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[515] For examples of murderous kings and fathers in the *Jātakas* see Hämeen-Anttila 2001: 192-193; 192 n. 41-42; 193 n. 43-45.

[516] According to Falk (1984) the *rājasūya* ritual contained originally an adoption of a surrogate son (*pratihita*) by a king, who does not have a son, but this was later replaced by a procedure where the king anoints his own son and identifies with him (118-122). The legend of Śunaḥśepa, which is meant to be a legend of origin for the *rājasūya*, thus contains a sonless king and an adoption, but they are combined in a problematic way. The final narrative makes a good story, but its relation to the ritual is weakened by many discrepancies (130-131).

composing a narrative by combining various old pieces, placing it into a new frame and inventing new details and connections between the parts that suit the new frame is evident.

It is now time to look at the frame structures. There are two different outer frames. The first is the ritual of *rājasūya*, as it is described in the end of the narrative. The second is the text of the *Aitareya* which forms similar exegetical frame as in other brāhmaṇic narratives. From the viewpoint of this second frame the first frame is virtual: it does not exist in the (fictional) world of the narrative or its frame. Even so, it is not non-existent, because the exegetical frame refers to it and the text is dependent of it: the reason for the presence of the narrative is that it should be narrated in the actual ritual.

As to the narrators, in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa two narrators may be detected. The exegetical (primary) narrator is outside the story: he describes the procedure with which the narrative is to be performed in the *rājasūya* ritual. The (secondary) "story" narrator is inside the story: he tells the story and is most clearly visible in the last verses of the narrative before the appearance of the exegetical narrator. There is a difference in the narrative voices. The exegetical narrator uses the normal singsong tone typical of the exegetical parts of the *Brāhmaṇas*. He is concerned with proper ritual usage and mystical correspondances ("He tells it seated on a golden cushion: seated on a golden cushion he [*adhvaryu*] responds: gold is glory, truly thus he makes him prosper and be glorious."). The style of the "story" narrator is plain and his prose has not very much emotional colour, but he stays inside the narrative, follows its trajectory and does not bother himself about its function in greater ritual context. Not for once does he indicate that this story is in same way unusual or exemplary and should be performed anywhere because of this. He can be said to be the "speaker" of the narrative stanzas in the third sequence because his own stanzas are composed in the same style.[517]

Next, the narrative is levelled so that the middle sequence is framed by the two dramatic sequences. The structure is similar to the "ring compositions" and the *omphalos* structures of the Ṛgvedic hymns. It also resembles the scheme with which the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* retells the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī. The "oldest version" of the story of Śunaḥśepa is put in the middle with the appropriate quotations from its source, the *Ṛgveda*. Then it is supplied with a context that explains it and gives it a new meaning.

[517] It may also be remarkable that the narrative begins like almost all the narratives in the later compendiums and collections of framed tales: "There was a king... who had many wives but no son." But also many other brāhmaṇic tales have this once-upon-a-time beginning.

The middle sequence has also three parts. It begins with the preparation of the *rājasūya* ritual. There are four priests admistering it, all of them legendary. Among them is Viśvāmitra, who will step forth after Śunaḥśepa has rescued himself with the Ṛgvedic verses. There is Ajīgarta, who the composer of the *Aitareya* narrative has made the rogue of the piece: an evil father. The high dramatic point is achieved when the father approaches the son, whetting his knife.

After Śunaḥśepa has appealed to the gods and been set free, the middle part proceeds to a concluding passage that binds it to the first and third sequences. The king Hariścandra is cured, because Varuṇa has been appeased by the prayers of Śunaḥśepa. Śunaḥśepa, who has worked miracles with his verses, is called by the mighty seers to perform a *soma* sacrifice, and again he rises to the occasion like a professional. It is "a quick pressing" because the full ceremony would take too much time (also within the scope of the narrative). The skill and the vision which Śunaḥśepa shows in the middle section make him worthy of the adoption and the change of identity which follow in the third section.

The two outer sequences can be seen as a prologue and an epilogue for the middle sequence: they have been added to tell "the whole story" of the mysterious Vedic seer who was bound and released from a sacrificial post. It is not probable that the original story of Śunaḥśepa, which we do not have, was similar to the one in the *Aitareya*. Perhaps Śunaḥśepa was simply seized by Varuṇa because he had committed a sin, as it is told in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, and the motif of the binding to a sacrificial post was added later. Still this piece of information is present already in the Vedic hymns. Only the reason for binding him as a victim is a mystery, as is his name. Why would a Vedic seer bear a name that is suitable for a śūdra?[518] The narrative of *Aitareya* finds answers for these questions. Śunaḥśepa is bound because he has been sold and bought to be a surrogate victim in a human sacrifice: a situation that immediately makes one sympathize with him. He has such a name because his father Ajīgarta has gone to seed: he has sunken so deep into a moral abyss that he is able to sell his son to be slaughtered and even kill the boy for money. These explanations are not only fitting and convincing: they also work as significant dramatic elements in the story.

The idea of the ritual of human sacrifice and a surrogate victim has made the author to compose, or adapt from another source, a narrative about the childless king

[518] There is, however, Śaunaka (from the same root śvan/śun, "dog"), a mighty seer in the *Mahābhārata* as well as an authority of Vedic sciences.

Hariścandra and his curious bargain with the god Varuṇa. If there is a weak point in this otherwise so logical narrative, it could be this. Why pray for a son only to promise to have him killed? The long procrastination mitigates this blunder: perhaps the king hopes that Varuṇa would forget when time passes. But of course the god remembers. The king must finally give up. After the delay Rohita is, on the other hand, grown-up, and does not obey his father but flees to the forest. There he finds Ajīgarta and buys his son as a surrogate. But only after six years: he tries to return five times and is five times turned back by Indra. This hopping about is probably added both to bring Indra into the tale and to create a numerical symmetry with the five occasions in which Hariścandra manages to avoid the sacrifice of his son. A significant fact that the reader of the narrative does not notice is that securing the victim is not enough to cure Hariścandra. According to the logic of this narrative the victim must be killed for the king to be healed.

Indra's role in the plot, as well as in the story of Cyavana, reflects his changing position within the Indian pantheon. In the *Brāhmaṇas* he is, for the first time, presented in a dubious light, but his misdeeds, so to say, are not so many. It is true that he is accused of murdering a brahman (e.g. in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*), and he presents himself as a trickster figure. In the narrative of Cyāvana he does not want anybody to know about the head of the sacrifice, even when other gods need it. But doing this he also sticks to his role as the protector of the magic potion of the gods (*madhu*/*soma*/ *amṛta*).[519] He can also be regarded, together with the Aśvins, as the god who aids the humans. In the narrative of Śunaḥśepa he can be seen as a warrior god who protects warriors, such like Rohita, against the grim law of Varuṇa and the rituals of the brahmans. His actions underline his proximity to the humankind, and this was to become a burden to him.[520]

The need for epilogue of the adoption comes from the discrepancy between the family background of Śunaḥśepa and his inner strength, nobility, vision and skill in ritual practice shown in (16)- (17(a)). He must leave behind Ajīgarta and his old name and get a new father and a new name. This is achieved in 17(b) and 18. But it may well be that the original version of this narrative ended earlier than now, already in the 17(b). Let us look again what the text says after Śunaḥśepa has performed the ritual.

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[519] This position is highlighted also in the various substories in the *Mahābhārata*, especially those that are embedded in the frame of the Ugraśravas (see p. 184).

[520] See Söhnen-Thieme (1998) for the development of the image of Indra and the "human aspect" of this god that hastened his downfall. In short, Indra's position weakens as the cult of Viṣṇu grows. In the Buddhist *Jātakas* and older parts of epic literature he is still revered.

Then Śunaḥśepa sat on the lap of Viśvāmitra. Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said : "Seer, give me back my son." "No", said Viśvāmitra. "the gods have given him to me." **He was Devarāta Vaiśvāmitra, and his descendants are the Kāpileyas and the Babhravas.** Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said: "Now, we must persuade him." Ajīgarta Sauyavasi said:
"You are from the clan of Aṅgiras by birth, a famous seer, the son of Ajīgarta;
Do not adandon your ancestry: O seer, return to me."

Here we have an overlap. The switch from one father to another happens already in the prose part. Ajīgarta wants his son back. Viśvāmitra declines, saying that the gods have given the boy to him. Then comes a sentence by the exegetical narrator which forms a closure. It affirms that there is no longer somebody called Śunaḥśepa, son of Ajīgarta, but Devarāta ("god-given" as Viśvāmitra has said), who is the son of Viśvāmitra and the forefather of the Kāpileyas and the Babhravas. The narrative may once have ended here, because next the whole episode starts again. This time Ajīgarta persuades Śunaḥśepa, who rejects his father, and Viśvāmitra acts after that. The scene where Viśvāmitra talks to his hundred and one sons (perhaps brought in to correspond to the hundred and one wives of Hariścandra in the prologue) is not really needed to make the narrative complete. The same could be said about the *gāthās* of Nārada in the beginning. I would suggest that in these places we have a secondary embedding.

It is worth while to compare the brāhmaṇic narrative to a later version that is embedded in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.60-62). There are differences in those parts of the plot that appear to be invented by the composer of the *Aitareya*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* the story is rather short and seems to have no other purpose than to glorify the power of the royal seer Viśvāmitra. The incident takes place in the middle of a narrative of the feud between Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, about which the hermit Śatānanda is telling to Rāma,[521] so these two are the narrator and the narratee of this embedded narrative. The king in this tale is an ancient ruler of Ayodhyā and called Ambarīṣa. He was performing a sacrifice, when the animal victim was stolen by Indra. The loss of victim was such a great sin that a human victim had to be substituted quickly to make amends. Searching everywhere the king found at last the brahman seer Ṛcīka and wanted to buy his son with a thousand cows. When the seer did not want to give the eldest son and his wife did not want to give the youngest, Śunaḥśepa, the middle one, volunteered to be taken. When the king travelled back with the boy in a chariot, they met Viśvāmitra, and Śunaḥśepa, "miserable

[521] See the chapter 3.5.1. p. 291.

with thirst and fatigue, fell into the sage's lap."[522] The boy asked the great man to save him. Viśvāmitra turned to his own sons and asked them to take the boy's place, and they all, "Madhuṣyanda and others" declined "in arrogance and disrespect", saying that this would be forbidden, like "eating dog's flesh".[523] Viśvāmitra flew into rage and cursed them to be eaters of dog's flesh for a thousand years. Then he advised Śunaḥśepa, telling him what gods he should pray and praise and how. The boy followed the advice and was freed from the sacrificial post, and Indra was happy and gave the king "manifold fruit".[524] Śunaḥśepa was not adopted by anybody but he was granted a long life.

This summary demonstrates how the story takes again a different form and tone in a different frame and context. In the version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* the Vedic gods and rituals have almost lost their meaning, whereas the mighty seers rule the earth and heaven too. Śunaḥśepa is not transformed by his ordeal, he is only doing what he is told to do. Viśvāmitra's curse has been preserved, but the reason is not the same, because there is no adoption.[525]

A significant feature of the narrative of Śunaḥśepa in the *Aitareya* is the mixture of prose and verse. The verses embedded in the prose are not only those taken from the *Ṛgveda*, as in the other brāhmaṇic narratives: there are several types of *gāthās* too. The *gāthās* of Nārada and Indra are general in meaning, similar to the stanzas that are inserted in the *Pañcatantra* and other Classical story collections of the *miśra* type. The *gāthās* of the third section are telling a story, like the *gāthās* of the *Jātakas* and later verse narratives of the *Bṛhatkathā* tradition. In this way the text is reflecting both contemporary variants and future developments.

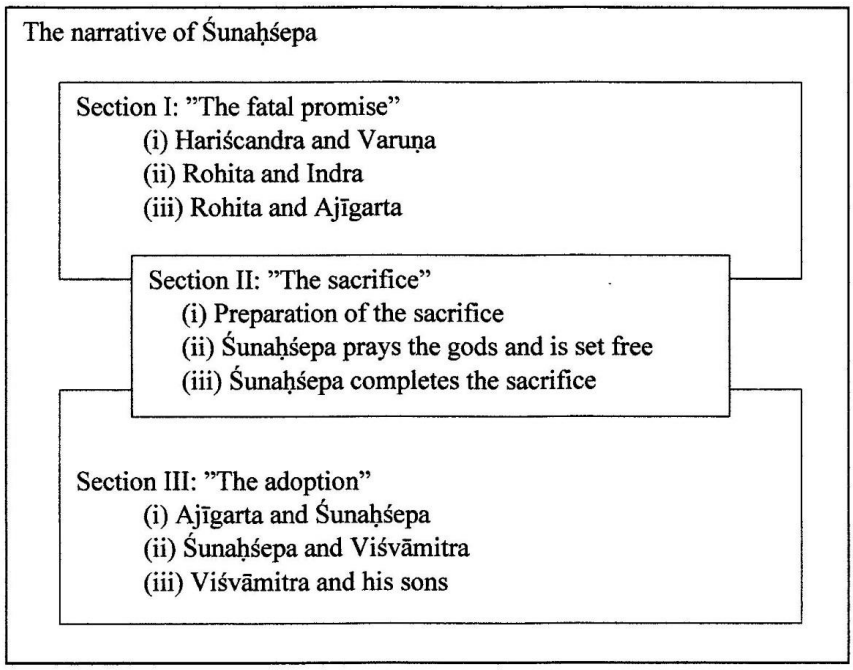
To conclude, I give two diagrams. The first (5a) presents the narrative of Śunaḥśepa in the terms of its linear plot, which is described above (pp. 106-110, the three sequences), and the second (5b) illustrates the various frame structures that are used. The two separate narrators (exegetic and storytelling ones) have their own frames. All three successive sequences have three parts, as described above. The ritual act is exceptionally included as a frame, because it provides a mirror for the innermost embedding ("The

[522] Translation by Goldman (1984: 240).
[523] Goldman 1984: 241.
[524] ibid.
[525] Of the *Purāṇas* the *Bhāgavata* and the *Brahma* follow the version of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. Some *Purāṇas* add an episode in which Viśvāmitra persecutes the king Hariścandra because of his cruel sacrifice. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* Śunaḥśepa is not mentioned, but there is the pious king Hariścandra, who with his wife and his son Rohitāśva suffers in the hands of angry Viśvāmitra.

narrative of the Vedic seer Śunaḥśepa"). It is to be noted that the prologue and the epilogue do not form a symmetrical frame around the middle sequence.

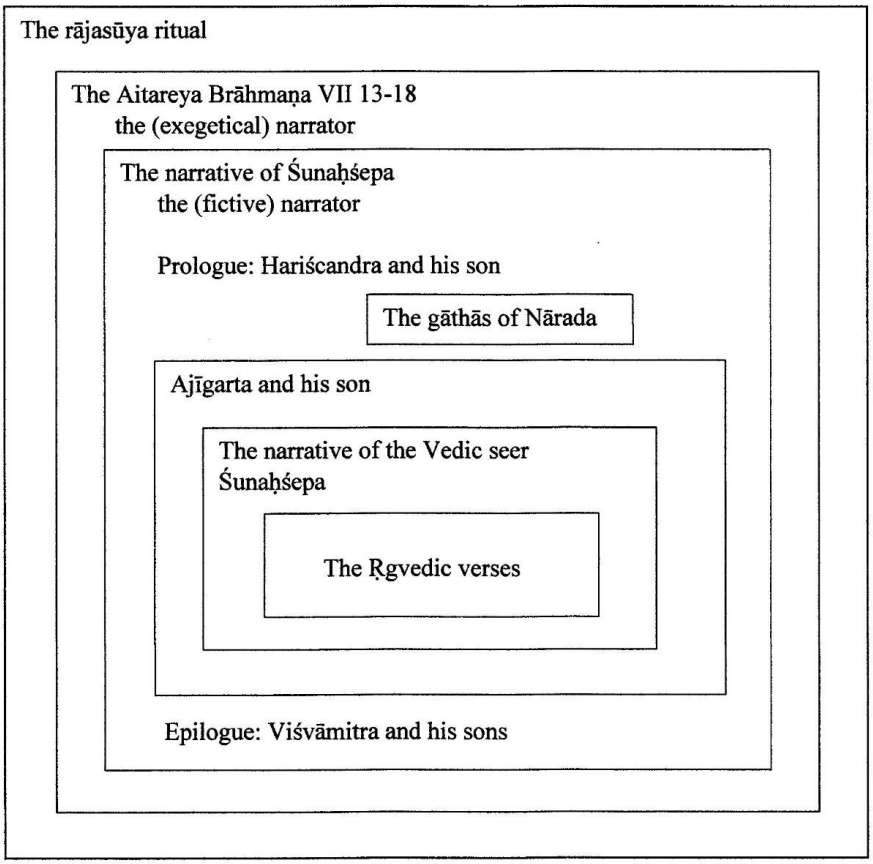
The story of Hariścandra and Rohita does not continue after the embedding: the epilogue has another story with other protagonists (Viśvāmitra and his sons).[526] But there is smaller frame that envelops neatly the middle sequence: the story of Ajīgarta. At the end of the prologue he gives away his son, in the beginning of the epilogue he wants the son back. And if we look at the father characters of the narrative, they form a symmetrical succession of possessing and losing. Hariścandra gets a son, whom he loses, and then gets back. Ajīgarta has a son, whom he gives away, and then wants back. Viśvāmitra gets a son and loses fifty sons because of this. The prominence of this motif in the narrative tempts a reader give it a subtitle "Fathers and Sons". In the light of this, it may well be that the *gāthās* of Nārada in the beginning are not as superfluous as they seem to be at the first encounter.

Diagram 5a. The plot of the narrative of Śunaḥśepa



[526] In the narrative of Cyavana the frame (the story of Cyavana) is taken up after the embedded narrative of the Aśvins, Dadhyañc and the god's sacrifice.

Diagram 5b. The narrative structure of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* VII 13-18.[527]



2.4. Texts or rituals?

It is time to look back and measure the Vedic and brāhmaṇic examples inspected above in the light of theories and concepts of narratology to confirm that they provide evidence

[527] This diagram shows only the frames: it does not say anything about the age of the various parts. Still it is clear that the innermost narrative piece is the oldest here. In the part "Viśvāmitra and his sons", as suggested above, there is the short version that ends with the summary of the narrator, and a longer version that elaborates the story in verses. These may be analyzed horizontally (two parallel narratives) or vertically (a summary with an embedding that tells the story in detail).

for the use of frames and embeddings in Indian literature that predates the *Mahābhārata* and the *Pañcatantra*. But first I must assess a hypothesis about the origin of the frame story that has been around for almost thirty years but never really put under a magnifying glass, assessing critically the argument and its evidence.[528] It would be remarkable indeed if a structure as distinctive as the frame narrative would appear in the literature first time used as expertly and profusely as in the *Mahābhārata*. This is not probable, and equally dubious is the explanation for this "sudden invention" that it was copied from the structure of Vedic rituals. Now, after analysing the Vedic narratives, it is suitable to make the first effort to confront this idea. I will return to it in the chapter 3.4., after having discussed the frames of the *Mahābhārata*, because the other half of the argument concerns the epic.

The ritual explanation was first suggested by Michael Witzel. He brought it up shortly at the end of his article on the Cyavana story, more as a suggestion or an afterthought without much evidence.[529] The merging of two rituals that was behind the two brāhmaṇic narratives of Cyavana led him to think about the *soma* ritual: in it the actual pressing of *soma*, the main action, is surrounded by smaller rituals. After mentioning the ritual, however, he backed up his idea most of all with literary predecessors, the organization of Avestan *Gāthās*, the division of Vedic hymns to *maṇḍalas*, the *Khilās* that were added to the corpus and later *saṃhitās,*[530] and the ritual which he wanted to see as a nearest model is described only vaguely. After describing briefly the *soma* sacrifice, Witzel summarizes his thoughts: "This ritual technique was, when compared to the predominance of poetry or, — at least — putting together 'new

[528] I would put this hypothesis into the box of "clever postmodernist posings" but as it is introduced by serious scholars it has be taken seriously. Because of their prestige it has been passed on without criticism. The other thing to regret is that it serves as an invitation to self-serving scholastic gymnastics, in which texts are read through all kinds of unliterary grids and matrixes for the sake of novelty.

[529] Witzel 1987: 410-414.

[530] Some of these indeed provide a model for framing, but not all. Witzel refers to the work of K. Hoffman who has compared the legends in the Yajurveda *saṃhitās*, saying that their composition is characterized by addition and insertion (Witzel 1987: 410 n.62). This is correct, and these legends should be investigated in the light of the other early evidence of framing devices. But all the examples given by Witzel are not valid. Witzel concludes in his note (1987: 413): "[...] even the structure of the RV-saṃhitā is one of a frame: the family books II-VIII have been added to by the Soma book 9 and this first collection was encased by the frame of books I and X." Here the general idea of "grouping smaller things to build a bigger thing" is called framing, but the only "frame" is the concept of a literary work (the *Ṛgveda*, the *Avesta* etc.), and so this claim applies to every other literary work as well. The organization and grouping of texts in a collection is an external procedure, not something that touches the actual literary structures. E.g. in a collection of short stories the short stories are not embeddings and the collection into which they are put is not a narrative frame: it is certainly a feature of literary texts (like the organization of *sūtras*, see above) but it is external and belongs mainly to the domain of the "concrete author". This, of course, varies from text to text. In some modern or highly inventive texts typographical tricks and even book covers can be a part of the text or creative work, but these are marginal cases and not relevant in studies concerning the pre-modern era.

hymns' from older material in Ṛgvedic time, thrust into prominence in the Middle Vedic period. This will have provided the model and the instigation for the composition of this [i.e. Cyavana narrative] and other legends on the form of several 'concentric' rings or frames, as it were, boxes inside boxes". To me at least this means that there was the prominent Ṛgvedic activity of putting together new hymns of older material. Why then, with this prominence of the Ṛgvedic example, the ritual technique that was at that time *not* prominent would have become the model of combining different texts?[531]

Witzel continues: "At its latest, this ritual technique must have developed with the establishment of the 'classical' Vedic ritual (or rather before) the period of Y(ajur)V(eda) Saṃhitās when the existing pre-classical (Ṛgvedic, and various unknown or more popular) rites were assembles and put into a complicated, interdependent, and mutually interactice framework of their own by merging larger or smaller units of various rites in an additive fashion characterized by framework-like insertions." Here Witzel makes the structure of the Vedic rituals more intricate than it really is and chooses such words to describe them that connect them to the framed narratives.[532] When we look at the actual rituals, the basic structures are fairly simple, and the ritual procedures and "mutual interaction" have parallels in rites of other religious systems (which did not prompt the authors of literary texts to go wild with the idea of framing as in India).

One may compare the evolvement of the narrative frame to the development of other texts at the time, e.g. the mode of exposition in the *sūtra* collections, as exemplified by Pāniṇi's grammar with its organization to sets of rules, sections and sub-sections. Pāniṇi's work was guided by the style of the handbooks of rituals and Vedāṅgas[533] like grammar and etymology, not by the structure of the rituals. Later, it can be observed how the *sūtras* were augmented by various commentaries that surrounded textually (and also visually, in the written form) the original like frames. Moreover, the way of the *sūtras* and *śāstras*[534] to organize information into larger and smaller units is not unique or astounding: it is the product of a rational mind which describes the phenomena in a

[531] Witzel says himself that the origin of the device of the frame story "cannot be pinned down to this particular legend [Cyavana story], and though it was inspired by the ubiquitous ritual framework, it cannot be explained from just this singular feature. Indian thought makes use of frames in many other areas as well. I here remind only of the frequently found 'inclusivism' in religion." (1987: 410-411)
[532] The inspiration here comes from Fritz Staal who describes the rituals as "trees" in several occasions, and Heesterman's wording (1957: 64) "rites are intercalated, blocks inserted".
[533] The auxiliary sciences for the study and maintenance of Vedic corpus.
[534] *Śāstras* are longer textbooks of different disciplines of thought that aim to a thorough explanation and coverage of the subject (compared with *sūtras* which give short rules and premises). The word refers also to a branch of science or knowledge.

scholarly and disciplined fashion.[535] That same mind organized and augmented the Vedic rituals: so it is a question of parallel phenomenons in literary and ritual areas, not causal relationships.[536]

The idea of a ritual origin suggested by Witzel was, however, something new, and Christopher Minkowski wrote soon an article to prove it.[537] He chose to work backwards and show that the framing of the *Mahābhārata* had ritual origin. He presents more evidence than Witzel for the model being taken from the rituals, but again, the part of evidence of the "complicated ritual structures" is given in the end and is short[538] compared to the bulk of information about the outer frames of the Epic that precedes it and is presumably intended to support it, although it does not, as we shall see in the chapter 3.4.. Again, the evidence is interpreted as substantial and decisive when it is meager and ambiguous, and the description of ritual structures is grandiose, but vague.

As said above, the discussion about the origin of the frames of the *Mahābhārata* will be continued later, after those frames have been analyzed. Here it is relevant to concentrate on the definition of the frame story.

Minkowski does not give much thought to this, although he should. He has a preconceived idea of what the frame story is. He says: "An epic frame story is more than embedded, it is a story about the telling of another story. The narrative technique for maintaining this self-conscious frame is fully worked out in the epic and becomes the model for later Indian frame stories."[539] Yes, it is probable that the *Mahābhārata* was a model for later frame story cycles, and it has a complicated and self-conscious frame. The framing apparatus in the *Mahābhārata* is indeed so complicated that its successors could not surpass it. Neither did they want to, because they had their own agendas: the composers of the *Rāmāyaṇa* aimed at a more compact work, and the composers of the *Pañcatantra* looked also to the direction of the learned *śāstras* and philosophical works.

The model for the narrative situation in the *Mahābhārata* ("the story about the telling of another story") could have been inspired by the "storytelling breaks" in the rituals, but this does not imply that anything else should have been taken from the rituals.

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[535] The texts that describe and explain the rituals are much more complicated than the rituals themselves.
[536] Witzel says (1987: 410-411) that the origin of the device of the frame story "cannot be pinned down to this particular legend [Cyavana story], and though it was inspired by the ubiquitous ritual framework, it cannot be explained from just this singular feature. Indian thought makes use of frames in many other areas as well. I here remind only of the frequently found 'inclusivism' in religion."
[537] Minkowski 1989. Minkowski 1991 is based on the same ideas but brings nothing new to this discussion.
[538] Four pages out of twenty, which is too little when the whole argument is based on this evidence.
[539] Minkowski 1989: 402.

The Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* has its origins in the narrative tradition, and the fixed form in which it has been preserved presents, in my opinion, a blend of authentic oral storytelling and scriptural simulation of it, so-called "pseudo-oral discourse" which is common in many literary traditions. The concept has been developed by Fludernik under her theory of conversational and oral narration, and it offers a perfect model also for the epic.[540] But what is even more important here is that behind the *Mahābhārata* there is a long literary tradition of putting texts inside each other. This has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters. It is not sound to brush off the prehistory of the frame by claiming that only such an elaborate frame as that which the epic uses counts as a frame. But this is just what Minkowski does. I will quote him in full to be able to contradict. Italics are mine.

"There is *no sustained embedding in the narrative literature that predates the Mahābhārata*. As Witzel has shown, in the Brāhmaṇas there are predecessors to the framed story, but although in e.g., J(aiminīya) B(rāhmaṇa) 3.120-28 collections of stories which are maintained at different narrative levels are found, *there is still no frame story as such, no story about the telling of stories.* The Jātaka stories do have introductions that describe the context of their telling, but each story stands independently; *there is no frame story that links them together*. In the Rāmāyaṇa a frame story comparable to that of the Mahābhārata is initiated with the description of the recitation by Rāma's sons, Kuśi (sic) and Lava, at the Aśvamedha being performed by Rāma (Rām(āyaṇa) 1.4). But *the frame is not sustained with repeated questioning*, and *appears to be much less organic* to the Rāmāyaṇa than the Janamejaya, Vaiśampāyana and the Dhṛtarāṣṭra-Sañjaya frames are to the Mahābhārata."[541]

The problem here is that Minkowski accepts as frame stories only those examples which have a "sustained"[542] and "organic" frame with a narrative situation which contains a narrator-character and a narratee-character the latter of which uses long

[540] For a summary of the theory see e.g. Fludernik 2009: 63-73. See the chapter 3.4. for a more thorough discussion of this.
[541] Minkowski 1989: 413.
[542] This means a frame that contains many embeddings, returns in regular intervals and is closed in the end. The second frame of the *Mahābhārata* suits this scheme, but the first frame does not. The narrator Ugraśravas and his audience (Śaunaka and his hermits) disappear after the 1.55. and are then completely absent, except for the verses in the end (XVIII:5) which close the frame but do not include the audience and question-answer dialogue which is so important for the type frame that characterizes the epic. Otherwise there are only some stray "dips", as Hiltebeitel calls them (2015: 45), namely a short sentence of II: 46.4. (no audience again) and a bit more in XV:42-43 (no audience here either). Minkowski says that in spite of this "the presence of Ugraśravas is felt throughout the epic" (1989: 405), I would call this wishful thinking. The presence of Vyāsa ("The author") is the one which is felt throughout, and he does not have any textual frame (see 3.3.2.).

and elaborate questioning formulas[543]. This is a highly sophisticated model, and it is not likely that it could be found in all its glory in the earliest phases of a culture that is still confined to oral preservation of the texts. What can be clearly observed, however, are the elementary and fluid forms of the "frame-in-making". They cannot be ruled out, as it was demonstrated theoretically in the chapter 2.1.1. above.

But this is exactly what Minkowski does. And after he has dismissed the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Jātakas* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* by saying that these do not qualify as frame narratives, it is easy to conclude that the *Mahābhārata* provides the first example of a frame story (and "proper frames" in general) and the model for the frame story, once and for all, came from the rituals, because the narrative situation (by which Minkowski defines the frame story) in the epic has been modelled after the rituals (which is not adequately proved). This is circular reasoning. The frame story cannot be defined by it, or by intuition, or by an act of will. In addition, it is odd to be so unconditional, restrictive and critical when defining the frame story and so liberal, careless and uncritical when comparing rituals and narratives.

The discussion in the previous chapters has made clear that the narratives that precede the *Mahābhārata* should not be summarily passed by when writing the history of the frame story in India. The narratives of the *Brāhmaṇas* are embedded stories with a frame, and framing and embedding were familiar procedures already to the poets of the *Ṛgveda*. They provide also example of metanarration that can be observed also in the Epic. In the next chapter, determined to read the Indian literature as literature and not only an ancillary of theology and a reflection of rituals, I will look again at the narrators and frames in this material to give a general view of how they work, to support the idea that the idea of the framing was present everywhere in the literature and it is not logical to search a model outside the texts. I also discuss briefly the narrative portions of the *Upaniṣads*, as they are important when talking about the idea of dialogue and conversation as narrative elements. I will return to them in the chapter 3.5.3.

[543] The later frame story collections did not copy the elaborate question-answer-procedure of the *Mahābhārata*, but preferred to use only the simple question *katham etat*? "how was it?" to introduce the story. But they maintained the conversational frame that is present also in the *Mahābhārata*. See chapter 2.6. below.

2.5. Frames, levels and narrators in the Ṛgveda

I begin by delving deeper into the devices used in the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* (2.2.1 and 2.2.2. above) which I called "proto-framing". First of all there is the narrative level of "the concrete author" (Schmid)[544] or "the historical author" (Nelles): s/he is outside the text. Nelles in his important work on literary frames summarizes neatly the differences between various actors in and around the text: "The historical author writes, the historical reader reads; the implied author means, the implied reader interprets; the narrator speaks, the narratee hears."[545]

For the Ṛgvedic material it is not easy to define "the historical author". Traditionally the hymns are attributed to families and groups of poet-seers and each hymn is given a specific "author" but, as said before, there is no definite information about them. It is possible to try to reconstruct some kind of background history for them by combining all the hints that are spread in the corpus[546], but nothing more can be known for certain than that some names and families had connections with some other names and certain regions and traditions. The hymns are expressions of individual creative thought and work, not of collective effort of anonymous masses. Nevertheless, all that is left of the "authors" are their their creations. This is the case in most old Indian works of literature and many of the older works of literature elsewhere.

In this study Viśvāmitra, Vasiṣṭha and others have been kept outside the text in the usual mode of "the historical author", who is different from the implied author (or the abstract author, a creator of the structure that symbolizes distance and nearness) [547] and also from the general narrator (Nelles). Most of the "seer-poets" are figures that appear also in myths, legends and similar narratives. Instead, there is "a poetical *persona*" of these characters that the poet-narrator uses. As seen in the hymn VII.86 (p. 61-62) "Vasiṣṭha" is a label, not a historical person who has composed this poem to tell about his own real-life experience. The narrator-poet has put on a mask of "Vasiṣṭha" for the

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[544] See the diagram 1a p. 27.
[545] Nelles 1997: 9. In early Indian oral-literary context "writing" should be changed into "composing" and "the reader" should be changed into "the audience". Nelles discusses "the historical author" and "the implied author" side by side, as they are often mixed by those who are not used to read texts with the apparatus of literary studies. The historical author writes the book. The implied author refers to the meaning and values that are implied by the text to guide the (real-life) audience in their interpretation.
[546] This has been done especially by Witzel (see e.g. Witzel 2003).
[547] See p. 20-21.

central part of the poem and is impersonating him, in the same way that the Vedic poet may speak with the voice of the god or a human character like Ghoṣā or Apalā in his poem. Therefore, in the analysis it is safer to keep the poet-narrator apart from external levels and give "Vasiṣṭha" the positions of the fictional author[548] and a fictional character, both called "Vasiṣṭha", of whom we know only things which are told in the poem and in the *Anukramaṇīs*. If we use narratological terms, the concrete author is asked to make a hymn to Varuṇa for purposes of the ritual, the implied author means to placate the god Varuṇa, the narrator-poet composes a poem using a framing structure with two successive outer frames that have a different degrees of formality and distance, and the character-narrator Vasiṣṭha acts and speaks in the embedded core narrative.

The external actors around the text include also editors and transmitters of the Vedic corpus. When analysing and comparing the Ṛgvedic and brāhmaṇic texts and deciding which is a subtext and which is not, one needs knowledge of the age, the history and the relative chronological position of the texts. Equally important is to remember that the rituals behind the Vedic poems were not the same which are described in the *Brāhmaṇas*, but simpler ceremonies, and their explanations and connections are for the most part invented much later.

The transmitters are influential in other way, too. As the Sanskrit language changed, the hymns became partially unintelligible. At the same time their use in the rituals changed: they were no longer eulogies or prayers, but nuggets of sacred power that gave potency to the ritual acts. This was reflected in their use in literature. Parts of them were lifted out from their context and quoted repeatedly. It is likely that the continuous lifting and quoting a text in a new context strengthened the habit of Indian literary culture, and also other forms of culture, to revere and cherish the old by preserving it inside the new. This feature has been called inclusivism and it has been noted by many scholars in Indian religion.[549] The enveloping of older religious myths and rites changed the Vedic religion into Hinduism, and later, by adopting and advocating vegetarianism and non-violence which were the basic tenets of Buddhism and Jainism, the orthodox religion "changed while remaining the same". Inclusivism, indeed, does not touch only religious matters: it is also a strong instigator in the transmission of art, literature and all those

[548] See the chapter 3.3.2. on Vyāsa below.
[549] Witzel 1987: 410-11 (esp. 410 n. 63); Gonda 1965; Oberhammer 1983 (which contains the lecture of Paul Hacker on the inclusivism in Indian culture).

narratives that reflect, mould and define the culture, like the dharmic[550] narratives of the *Mahābhārata*.

The "quoting habit" or "inclusivism" or "recycling" is present also in the *Ṛgveda* itself. Many of the hymns are composites, built up from stanzas that have different origins, as was seen in the preceding chapters. These building-blocks are used to give structure to the poem and to provide it with a sections that envelop neatly each other, so that the most meaningful, personal or narrative-laden part can be placed in the middle. This structure is what I call the "proto-frame".

The next level after that of the historical author and "the real world" is inside the text: the level of "the literary work"[551], or "diegetic level"[552]. The implied author operates here. The implied author of the Ṛgvedic hymns is one who shares most of the time the values and convictions of the Vedic society. They believe in gods whom they approach and describe in their poems. They want to have a good, long life and much cattle and sons. They are sensitive to nature, to a vast medley of human feelings and the mystery of cosmos and existence. They are ambitious in their art and self-conscious of their role, and this self-consciousness is reflected in the voice of the primary narrator. They know old legends and quote them to give their poems more resonance in the minds of their audience. When one thinks about the world-view of the poet, one thinks about the implied narrator. The abstract / implied narratee is in many ways similar. They appreciate the poet and the poem both for the ritual force and the show of artistic creativity. They love to hear again old, familiar myths and legends.

According to Schmid, the next level inwards is the "represented world". Others do not distinguish this level as separate from the one before, but they introduce a new actor: the fictive narrator or the primary narrator. The narrator does not write, or mean, but *speak*.[553] Every text has a narrator on this level: this is a fact that literary scholars remember but others often forget, thinking that only such narrators, who stand up and tell about themselves, or use first person, or say that they are going to tell a story, or address the reader like a person sitting next to them, are narrators.[554] The voice of a narrator is

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[550] The concept of *dharma*, "the (universal) ethic code", will be discussed in 3.1.
[551] The term used by Schmid in his diagram (p. 27).
[552] The term used by Genette.
[553] The concept of "unreliable narrator" shows how far this actor is from the two previous ones.
[554] Nowadays it is understood that even an "objective" and seemingly "narratorless" narrative has a narrator, otherwise it would never be narrated. The presence of a narrator in all narratives is agreed upon by such theorists as Stanzel, Genette, Schmid and Nelles. Usually the short stories by Ernest Hemingway are presented as models of "narratorless" narrative. That is not the case. They use external focalization, which pushes the narrator to the background. (See the chapter 1.3.). The reason why we do not always

heard immediately in the beginning and then all through the narrative, also when a character speaks: the narrator quotes the character speaking.[555]

In many ancient texts narrators tend to be omniscient:[556] they know what happens in different places at the same time and can enter into the minds of the persons they speak about. The narrators of the *Brāhmaṇas* are mostly of this type. They adopt the omniscient position in a self-evident way, because they are posing as authorities of what they are talking about. However, in the narratives they view their characters and events as if they were mechanical, paying no attention to irony or subtleties of feeling. They report about actions, not emotions. If they do the latter, they give a simple description, telling a person is "afraid" or "happy". After Urvaśī has heard the lament of Purūravas "[...] she felt pity for him" (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* X.5.1.10, see p. 100). This crude "labelling" of emotions can be interpreted as a feature of archaic storytelling, or a way to show authority over the narrative by paying no attention to the independence and inner life of the characters. To modify this picture, it can be said that in the longer narratives the actions can tell much of the characters. Especially the frail but resourceful Cyavana in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* comes out as a three-dimensional character.

The narrators of the *Ṛgveda* are different. They are not omniscient in matters that they narrate. They can tell about the ancient deeds of Indra or the Aśvins, but they do not know the mind of the gods or the mysteries of universe. They probe, suggest and ask questions. They use mostly the *persona* of the poet-seer, but they may also present themselves as members of the Vedic "congregation", on behalf of which they praise the gods and mediate to them the fears, hopes, doubts and aspirations that the humans have. They are aware of the psychology behind these feelings. The dialogue hymns are examples of emotional subtlety that cannot be seen in their retellings in the *Brāhmaṇas*. The sensitivity of the Ṛgvedic narrators is undoubtledly linked with their medium: the possibilities and resources of poetical expression. Even though the composers were working for a religious system that required hymns for the gods that could be used in the ritual, the form of the Vedic poem allowed them to show that very old literature can be layered and complicated.

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notice the narrator is that we are so fluent in reading and interpreting fiction that the mediacy in it is not evident for us. See Margolin 2009: 365-366; Schmid 2010: 61-64; Nelles 1997: 45-46.

[555] Note that in this study the distictive narrator-voice is attributed to the fictive/primary narrator (cf. the Diagrams 1a and 1b pp. 27-28).

[556] See p.22.

The narrators of the *Brāhmaṇas* are non-diegetic: their narratives take place in a separate storyworld and they are not involved in them in any way. The *personas* of the Ṛgvedic poet-seers vacillate between the positions of the non-diegetic and diegetic narrator. When the poet-seer starts the poem saying: "Now I shall proclaim the heroic deeds of Indra!" (1.32) he establishes the narrative situation[557], but stays non-diegetic: he is the fictional narrator who is telling a story of events that happened in the mythical past and in which he himself is not involved. But the voice which says: "So I ask from my inner soul: when shall I be close to Varuṇa?" (VII.86) belongs to a diegetic narrator, who has a personal investment in the prayer and also in the embedded narrative of desperate Vasiṣṭha that he narrates.

As seen in p. 53-55 above, for this particular poem (VII.86) I would posit three levels of narration and narrators: the primary level (verses 1 and 8) with a neutral narrator of the non-diegetic type, a secondary level (verses 2-3 and 6-7) on which the narrator quotes the voice of another, secondary narrator, who is less neutral, more diegetic; and the third level (verses 4-5) on which the tertiary narrator is emphatically diegetic "Vasiṣṭha", who is also a narrator-character. A simpler analysis would merge the primary and secondary levels and explain that the primary narrator changes his voice, switching from a non-diegetic to a diegetic position between 1 and 2 and back again in 8. In any case the core of verses 4-5 forms an embedding, which gives "the narrative of Vasiṣṭha" told by himself.

The embeddings in hymns like this are not introduced by formulaic words that mark the start of an act of telling, and so the narrative situation is not formally established. Instead, the embeddings are presented as quotations, in the case of VII.86 letting the character speak himself or, as in many hymns to the Aśvins, referring to the deeds and the legends of the gods by giving a mini-narrative: "With your mighty power, o Aśvins, you restored the youth of old Cyavāna" (I.117.). In some hymns, like V.78, the embedding is longer and the structure consisting of a frame and an embedded narrative is more evident.

In the monologues the position of the narrator in relation to the embedded narrative shows usually clearly, and there are even introductory clauses before the embedding starts ("s/he spoke thus"). So we can talk about a real frame story instead of proto-framing. Here is again the hymn VIII.91:

[557] He is also an explicit narrator (see Schmid 2010: 57-60, 66-67) in the sense that he presents himself as a (visible) "I".

1. **A girl who went to the water found soma in her way.**
She brought it home and said: "I will press you for Indra, I will press you for Śakra.
2. "My dear Indra, you who go from house to house inspecting them,
drink what I have pressed with my teeth, (drink) with grain and curd, cakes and a song of praise.
3. "We wish to understand you, and still we do not want to speak about it.
Slowly, even slower, drop by drop, you Drop, flow for Indra.
4. "Surely he will be able? surely will he be doing it? surely will he make us better?
Surely will we, who are hated by our husband, be united with Indra?
5. "These three places make sprout again, o Indra:
the head of my father, his field, and this part that is below my waist.
6. "That field, and this part of mine,
my father's head, make them all grow hair."
7. In the nave of the chariot, in the nave of a cart, in the nave of a yoke,
you of hundred powers have purified Apalā three times, o Indra, and given her sun-like skin.

Here the (primary) narrator begins a story about a girl and then gives the role of the speaker to the girl, quoting her. The girl, a character in the story of the narrator, presents the narrative as a (secondary) narrator-character: this creates two levels in the narrative. (We descend from "the narrated world" (the narrator tells a story) to the level of "the quoted world" (the narrator's character tells a story)). There are enough events to make a narrative: she presses *soma* for Indra, Indra comes and wants to make love with her in exchange of a boon, and after this happens, she makes three wishes: that the fields of his father will grow grain, that her father will become young again, and that she herself will have pubic hair. She stops her story here, but the narrator continues to the end, telling about a ritual which purified the girl called Apalā and made her sun-skinned. This additional information can signify that the embedding was lifted form another source and put inside "the Apalā frame" because the stories resemble each other.[558]

The hymn of Ghoṣā (X.40, pp. 59-63) has affinity to this hymn, to other Aśvin hymns and also to the Varuṇa hymn V.86. The primary narrator is neutral and hides behind general, formulaic questions and descriptions (stanzas 1-3 and 14). The secondary narrator is more personal: he talks in first person plural and has a private interest in

[558] The need to correct the skin is mentioned only in the frame, the embedded narrator ("the girl") speaks only of the absence of pubic hair. So there may be two different narratives. The embedding tells about a nameless girl who wants to grow up quickly (besides wishing a long life and riches for her father) and the narrator of the frame knows a different narrative altogether where a certain Apalā had a dermal disease and was cured by a ritual that brings folk medicine into mind. The story is developed further in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Bṛhaddevatā* (see the chapter 3.5.3.).

winning the favour of the Aśvins (5; 12-13). In the beginning of stanza 5 this intimate narrator begins a story about Ghoṣā, the daughter of a king, but like in the story of Apalā, after introduction of the character the narrating of the story is handed over to her. Ghoṣā's narrative is not as coherent as Apalā's. It begins with a request for the Aśvins to stay by her day and night (5), proceeds to an appreciative description of the twin gods (6), quotes the legends of the various persons that the Aśvins have saved (7-8) and only then starts to circle around the plea that is in her mind: a young virile husband, a joyous wedding feast and a marriage (9-11). Her wish comes out as a vivid metaphor in the end of her speech: "Let us go to the house of a bull of bursting seed who loves a red cow." The second narrator returns, again personal and emphatic, and echoes and amplifies her wish, making it the wish of all unmarried women: give me a rich suitor, love, and wealth, and strong sons. The narrative levels are clear but the embedded narrative is hazy and circumspect, the narrative elements being present only in the fragmentary description of married bliss and the names of the persons who would evoke their legends in the minds of the contemporary audience.[559]

The participation of the primary narrator varies in the monologues. Their part may be substantive, as in the hymn X.40 above. Sometimes the voice of the poet-seer can be heard only in the beginning and in the end, like in the monologue of Apalā. In the gambler hymn (X.34.) the primary narrator seems to be the gambler who tells his own story, as only the last verse (the charm) is spoken by the poet-seer and seems more like a tag than an integral part of the hymn. The dialogue (*saṃvāda*) hymns, however, have all a structure where the narrator plays a role similar to a director or a stage manager of a play or a film. He is viewing from outside the drama as it unfolds, and his muttering commentary from the backstage may be heard in the middle of the speech of the characters, who hold up the narrative that usually has the mode of persuasion, contest or strife.

The division of stanzas has been discussed before (pp. 77-78, 80-81, 83-84). In this study I have suggested that the stanzas which switch into the 3rd person and adopt onlooker's attitude could be given to a commentator-narrator who reports what is happening or has happened, and this might reflect an older system where the dialogue

[559] Here I have given an analysis that does not touch the question of chronology. It is probable that the inner core with its emphatic secondary narrator comes from a different source than the prologue and epilogue by the fictive narrator of the primary level. Especially in the Ṛgvedic context it does not really matter which of these is older.

was supported by a more complete narrative. Many interpretors and translators are nevertheless disturbed by the lack of symmetry which this creates and give these commenting 3rd person verses to the characters.[560] But it is not certain that absolute symmetry was the guiding principle in the composition (or compilation) of these hymns. This can be seen in the following example.

"The hymn of the race of Mudgala's wife" (X.102.) appears to give evidence for the existence of "a Vedic drama". Quite a crowd of voices is heard in it, and the sense of dramatic action is strong even though it is not clear what exactly happens. In the hymn a seer called Mudgala takes part in a horse race with a strange vehicle, a lopsided cart pulled by a bull, and the charioteer is his wife. It is clear that the wife and her odd vehicle are victorious, but many other things in the description of the race are mysterious, so I will not venture to give a translation. The division of the stanzas is interesting, and the translators usually agree upon it.

Of the 12 stanzas of the poem, Mudgala speaks in the stanzas 1, 3 and 12, addressing the god Indra. He prays Indra to make his disproportionate vehicle capable for the race (1), asks the god to avert the bolts of the enemies and the attacks of Dāsas and Āryas[561] (3) and praises again Indra after the race, comparing him to the bull which won it (12). The verses 2 and 4-8 are given to the poet-seer (the primary narrator). He describes Mudgala's wife while she mounts the chariot (2), describes the aggression of the bull which pulls the vehicle (4), announces that the bull wins and Mudgala gets a thousand and a hundred cows (5), returns to the race and gives a colourful detail (the droppings of the bull hit the face of Mudgala's wife, 6), returns even further back in time and tells how Mudgala yoked the bull (7), and finally compares Mudgala, who is also present in the chariot,[562] to the god Pūṣan[563] (8). The stanzas 9-11 are given to "the onlookers of the race" or "the bystanders". They comment favourably and admiringly the bull, the vehicle, the charioteer, Mudgala and the race. Especially in the verse 10 many voices are heard

[560] Supposedly "symmetry" means, in the dialogue hymns, that only the two persons speak, and they speak in turns without interruption from the beginning to the end. One may ask who requires this rigidity: do we know the mind of the composers so well?

[561] *Dāsas* are commonly presented as an enemy race. They represent the population that the Ṛgvedic people met in India. Their identity has been discussed most by Parpola (1988, 2012). *Āryas* must mean here also an enemy tribe or force.

[562] In the ancient Indian chariot race (which was a great event and a part of some important rituals) there are two persons in the chariot, the charioteer who drives the vehicle, and his master (who in a real combat did the fighting). In this mythical race Mudgala's wife is the charioteer and Mudgala stands in the chariot behind her.

[563] Pūṣan is a solar deity and a divine charioteer, who is said to have braided hair and a whip, similarly to the person described in the stanza 8. So Mudgala's wife would be a better object of comparison.

shouting questions, advice, comments and benedictions. This brings into mind the chorus of the Greek drama. One cannot avoid the thought that, if not a part of actual drama, this dialogue has once been the poetic part of a narrative, presented as dramatic "highlights" between the (improvised) prose that narrated the plot in a more logical and chronological way. Poems like this may also be a part of a version of an old legend that was put into Vedic verse. We cannot be sure, but the alternatives are all fascinating. What is certain is that the composers were after a dramatic presentation, not symmetry, and the role of the narrator in this hymn resembles the one of that mysterious "third person narration" in the other hymns.

The structure of the *saṃvāda* hymns is quite complicated. There is the primary narrator, the poet-seer, who is responsible of the primary narrative, which includes the setting of the scene (this is usually done in the middle and not in the beginning of the dialogue), the commentary in the third person and the final summary or recapitulation. Then there are two or more narrator-speakers, who provide the narrative in a dramatic form. Dialogue can be analysed in different ways. The traditional view has been that spoken dialogue is *mimesis*, "imitation", not diegesis ("narration").[564] This view has been criticized on the grounds that fictional dialogue is not natural speech but heavily stylized, compressed and edited, proving that it is produced by the fictive narrator.[565] Accordingly, some narratological theories treat quoted speech as an embedding.[566] After all its traditional function is either to give information about the character or advance the plot, and this it does in the *Ṛgveda*. In the analysis it can be described as the embedded narrative of quoted speech by the primary narrator, and the participants of the dialogue are embedded character-narrators of the secondary level who tell their own story, as in the monologues.

The conversation that is present in these Ṛgvedic narratives ushers in a structure, connected to the frame story device, in which the fictive/primary narrator or the narrator-characters introduce the story and not only uphold it but reflect on it, comment on it and

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[564] This view is has been taken also by some modern narratologists, e.g. Fludernik: "[...] in general the 'narrative discourse' of drama is taken to be that of the performance, where there exists no communicating narrator persona." (2009: 22).

[565] Thus e.g. Nelles (2009: 59-62). In Schmid (2010: 118-121) there a short but thorough discussion on the dialogue. Schmid is of the opinion that in modern Western narration (from the 18th century onwards) the characters' discourse does no longer correspond totally the narrator's discourse and they should be analyzed as separate. Together they still form the narrative text.

[566] This theoretic model concurs with the interpretation of the nature of the Ṛgvedic dialogues. The context implies that the dialogues are not here dramas or remnants of dramas, but parts of larger narratives. In addition they are transmitted to us as texts, without the mimetic apparatus or expectations that they should be "acted" by "actors".

explain it. It will flourish in the many narrative situations of the *Mahābhārata*. It is therefore necessary to look next at various early examples of what I would call "*the conversational frame*".

2.6. The conversational frame and the narrative levels in the Brāhmaṇas

The levels and narrators in the brāhmaṇic narratives are easier to distinguish than those in the Vedic hymns, but as said before, the frame is different from the frame in the later story collections. It can be categorizised as non-fiction, and this is a "fault" that has made many scholars[567] to dismiss the *Brāhmaṇas* as examples of frame narratives. But again, this is not formally or historically accurate. It is quite reasonable to maintain that texts that are framing narratives need not themselves be pure narratives for the structure to be called a frame story.[568] There are many examples of "factual" frames in philosophical and religious literature in the world. Within the Indian literary sphere, frames of such Classical narrative texts as the *Pañcatantra* resemble not only the frames of the *Mahābhārata* but the conversational and agonistic frames of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*. The didactic frame of many versions of this work is not an aberration or an external gimmick, but an inherent feature of a prominent type of a frame in India. This has to be kept in mind when assessing the eligibility of the structures of the *Brāhmaṇas* to be counted as frames and embeddings.

The type of frame in which theological, ethical and philosophical matters are discussed by two or various persons who then present exemplary narratives to prove their point is indeed common in many literary cultures. The *Symposium* of Plato (c. 380-370 BCE) is a well-known example from ancient Greece. Narratologists agree on that in spite of its philosophical aim and the fact that Plato is not called a Greek novelist but a Greek philosopher this dialogue has a frame story with embedded narratives. In the frame a primary narrator, Apollodorus, tells about a banquet that was held in honour of the playwright Agathon (the primary level). Among the guests there were the philosopher Socrates and his pupil Phaedrus, the playwright Aristophanes and the drunken politician

[567] Mostly those who want to emphasize the importance and uniqueness of the *Mahābhārata*.
[568] William Nelles in his study about frames does not make difference between descriptions, arguments and narratives: they all have narrative properties. See p. 25-26, 42, 44, 53, 158.

Alcibiades who gatecrashes the party. They all discuss the ethics of love. There is less conversation than in other Plato's works, as the text consists mostly of lectures on the subject, but the usual question-answer model of the Platonic dialogues is quite visible especially in the reactions of Socrates. Many persons in the party present their opinions, and the speeches of Alcibiades ("the story of origin of humans as two halves") and Socrates ("the story of Diotima and her theory of love") have outwardly the form of a narrative (embeddings of the secondary level, "quoted world").

So the *Symposium* is an example of a frame which is both a philosophical inquiry and a narrative. It must be admitted that its frame has more narrative qualities than the frame in the *Brāhmaṇas*: Apollodorus stands out as a clear-cut narrator and there are other characters and events (most of all the arrival of Alcidiades). Even so, the narrative consists mainly of philosophical argumentation, and the embedded narratives are "illustrations" and "justifications" of the opinions of the speakers.

The frames in the Bible are more heterogenous. In the Old Testament the narratives, e.g. the story of Joseph's adventures, are presented as a string of episodes that are part of the greater history of the chosen people of God. Many sections in the frame have no narrative content: there are lists of ritual decrees, or a collection of proverbs. In the New Testament Gospels the frame is more distinctive: it narrates the story of Jesus, and it contains both episodical narratives (e.g. the story of how Lazarus was raised from death) and parables told by Jesus ("The good Samaritan" etc.). Again, especially the frame of the Gospel of John contains material (symbolic equations and metaphysical argumentation) that does not look like narrative. In spite of the irregular and sacred frame, not only the stories Jesus tells but also "episodes" like those mentioned above are examples of frame narratives, because are conceived by the reader as separate narratives enveloped by the greater Biblical "narrative".[569]

These old examples illustrate that the framing apparatuses in older texts are not as distinctive as in later works, but "rawness" and variance are to be expected in a phase where literary forms have not been firmly established.[570] It can be asked why those other

[569] See e.g. Alter 2011.

[570] It would be healthy to reconsider expectations with which one meets "far-away" literatures (those that represent pre-modern and/or non-Western traditions). These are rarely analyzed in literary studies: only established Western classics like Homer (antiquity) or Chaucer (the Middle Ages) are taken into account. As said in the chapter 1.4., there are good reasons for this, and dips into foreign literatures may produce faulty results if the scholar has not taken time to get properly acquainted with the primary material. In spite on this it has to be kept in mind that the modern Western literary forms (novel, poem, short story etc.) are not ideals and measures for all literature.

literatures did not take Plato's dialogues or the embedded parables of Jesus as a model for literary framing, develop it further and start to use the frame narrative extensively in all narrative literature, as it happened in India.[571] The answer, I believe,[572] is that other literatures did not have as persistent need or habit to quote older texts inside new texts as the authors of old Indian literature. Once this habit took hold in Vedic literature, it developed into an enthusiastic thrill when there was a possibility of gathering all relevant, related or attractive narratives inside one great narrative (the *Mahābhārata*). After this, the tradition continued with a more moderate model of neatly layered multileveled narratives with a common theme (the story cycles of the classical age).[573]

It is important to keep in mind that the basis for the theological, exegetical and philosophical frames in the early Indian literature has been the ethic of the preservation of the texts. First, old and authoritative texts were quoted inside the younger texts to bind the latter into the tradition. Secondly, narratives of secular origin needed a strong justification to be included. "Plain narratives" were not judged as valuable by the Vedic culture: evidently they had a mighty presence in the oral literature, but the priestly guardians of the literary tradition saw little reason to preserve them as such.[574] Their one possibility for survival was to be put in a theological context in which they were given a theological frame. In other words, in a historical period which did not preserve purely narrative texts, a frame narrative in which *both* the frame and the embedding are pure narratives could not survive. Therefore the frames (or the embeddings) are bound to be something else than pure narratives. Frames and embeddings they still are, and they represent an earlier phase of the frame story device.[575]

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[571] There are, however, individual examples of copying the frame device in earlier literature. Athenaeus of Naucratis (2nd and 3rd centuries CE) took Plato as his model when using a dialogic frame in his *Deipnosophistae* ("The Banquet of Philosophers"). There is also a doubling of frame and embedding in this work, because the frame dialogue contains narratives about learned dialogues in past gatherings.

[572] Naturally the status and influence of the *Mahābhārata* has been central. But it does not explain the use of frames in the later Vedic literature.

[573] Here note should be made of the mediaeval European "*exemplum*" literature, in which the collection of Petrus Alphonsi (see p. 30-31) also belongs to. Many studies mention the *Pañcatantra* as the forefather of collections of exempla. Some, e.g. Haug 1991: 264-287, go even further: Haug analyses the expository style of the *Pañcatantra* at length (270-274). Haug sees that animal fables which are collected inside a frame provide an ideal form of a collection of exempla. Because the classical frame is outside the scope of this study, this intriguing connection cannot be developed further.

[574] Not all religious groups in India needed a religious reason to preserve narratives. The Jains collected in the Classical age all kinds of narratives without an obligation to give them a Jain frame or interpretation (as testified by an ornate version of the *Pañcatantra* by the Jain author Pūrṇabhadra (1199)). But early Jain composers want to add a didactic part (a sermon of a *kevalin*, enlightened monk etc.) to the story, like the Buddhists. See Esposito 2015: 88-96.

[575] The reasons behind the choice of inserted narrative material are not always clear. Why e.g. the story of Purūravas and Urvaśī was so significant that it was incorporated into the collection of hymns? Either the

Accordingly, early framed prose narratives, like those described above, have often a form in which there is a "factual" frame within which narratives are used as examples of the particular issue that is discussed, or vice versa, so that a narrative envelops a theoretical discussion. The frame that is most similar to the Platonic dialogues appears in the earliest prose *Upaniṣads* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya*, c. 700 - 500 BCE). The *Jātakas* belong also to the genre of "exempla" (see p. 154 n. 574): its core (*gāthās*) belongs to the age of the epics, whereas the prose portion was fixed much later.[576] Of the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Jaiminīya*, the *Śatapatha* and the later parts of the *Aitareya* have been composed roughly during the same period as the two *Upaniṣads* mentioned above. The *Brāhmaṇas* were part of the orthodox priestly tradition, whereas the *Upaniṣads* represented the teachings of ascetic wood-dwellers and a revolution in religion in which ritualistic tradition and exegesis were replaced by new philosophical ideas about *brahman* and *ātman*, rebirth, *saṃsāra* and *mokṣa*. Still there are similarities in the frame.

In the *Upaniṣads* there are narrative passages scattered along the main body of the text, which consists of either philosophical myths about the origin of the universe or dialogues that discuss the ultimate nature of the human life, cosmos and existence. Both of the old *Upaniṣads* mentioned above tell short anecdotal stories about gurus and their disciples. Here are four examples of the short narratives attached to the philosophical discussions.

(1) Oṃ. Bālaki the Proud, the Gārgya, was a learned man. He said to [the king] Ajātaśatru of Kāśī[577]: I must teach you about *brahman*."

Ajātaśatru said: "We will give you a thousand cows for such a teaching. People will run crying: A Janaka, A Janaka!"

Gārgya said: "I worship as *brahman* the person [puruṣa] who is in the sun."

Ajātaśatru said: Do not talk to me about him. I worship him as the topmost, the head and king of all beings. Whoever worships him as such becomes the topmost, the head and king of all things."

[Gārgya continues to give *brahman* various meanings, and the king knows them all better than him. He becomes the student of the king.] (*The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II.1.)

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inserted passages had some connection with the religion and the ritual, or they were significant for the authors and their audience in "some other way": not much more can be said.

[576] The *Jātakas* and their dating will be discussed in the chapter 3.5.2. There is also the *Milindapañha*, "(The king) Milinda's questions" (100 BE - 300 CE), which is a dialogue between the Indo-Greek king Menander (Menander I or Menander II, a historical person) and the Buddhist monk Nāgasena about the teachings of Buddhism. It has survived in a Pāli version.

[577] A legendary king of Kāśī (Varānasi).

(2) Oṃ. Janaka of Videha[578] offered a sacrifice, with munificent gifts for the priests. There the brāhmaṇas of the Kurus and Pañcālas[579] were gathered together. It occurred to Janaka of Videha to wonder which of the brāhmaṇas was most learned. So he penned off a thousand cows, and ten gold pieces were attached to the horns of each.
He said to them: "Blessed brāhmaṇas, whoever is the truest brāhmaṇa among you, let him drive away these cows." The brāhmaṇas dared not.
But Yajñavalkya called to his own student, "Sāmaśravas, good lad, drive out these cows." And he drove them out. [Other brāhmaṇas are angry, and Aśvala, the hotar priest of king Janaka, challenges Yajñavalkya with difficult questions. Yajñavalkya knows all the answers, and Aśvala falls silent.] (*The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III.1)

(3) Oṃ. Janaka of Videha sat to give audience. Yajñavalkya approached him. Janaka said to him:
"Yajñavalkya, why have you come? Are you wanting cattle, or subtle arguments?"
"Both, your majesty."
"Let us hear what someone else has told you."
"Jitvan Śailini told me that speech is *brahman*."
"Śailini says what anyone would say who has a mother, a father and a teacher to teach him, when he says that speech is *brahman*: for what would anyone have who could not speak? But he did not tell you its dwelling and support?"
"He did not."
"So you tell us, Yajñavalkya."
[Yajñavalkya tells what he knows. Janaka is impressed and gives him a thousand cows. Yajñavalkya says that his father has told him not to accept gifts before he has taught. Then Janaka asks again the opinion of another teacher and then the opinion of Yajñavalkya. Five teachers are thus introduced and Yajñavalkya beats them all, getting every time a thousand cows.] (*The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV:1)

(4) Satyakāma[580] Jābāla[581] asked his mother, Jabālā: "Mother, I want to live the life of a *brahmacārin*[582]. What lineage do I belong to?"
She said to him: "Darling, I do not know what lineage you belong to. I got you in my youth, when I travelled about a great deal as a servant, so I do not know what lineage you belong to. But I am called Jabālā and you are called Satyakāma. You can say you are Satyakāma Jābāla."
He went to Hāridrumata Gautama and said: "Blessed one, I will live the life of a *brahmacārin* with you. Blessed one, I would come to you as my teacher."
He said: "Good lad, what lineage do you belong to?"

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[578] A legendary king, also famous for his wisdom.
[579] The kindgom of Kuru roughly corresponds the present Haryana and eastern Punjab. Kuru was also the name of the tribe living there. Pañcāla corresponds the modern Uttar Pradesh.
[580] Satyakāma means "truth-loving".
[581] Jābāla means "the son of Jabālā".
[582] A *brahmacārin* is a student that studies under and does service to some guru.

He said: "Sir, I do not know what lineage I belong to. I asked my mother, and she answered me: 'I got you in my youth, when I travelled about a great deal as a servant, so I do not know what lineage you belong to. But I am called Jabālā and you are called Satyakāma. You can say you are Satyakāma Jābāla.' Sir, I am Satyakāma Jābāla."
Hāridrumata said to him: "No one who was not a brāhmaṇa could have explained it so. Good lad, bring firewood: I shall initiate you. You have not departed from the truth." (*The Chāndogya Upaniṣad* IV.4.)[583]

In the first example the narrative that is woven around a philosophical argument tells how the king proved to have more knowledge about philosophy than the philosopher, and the latter, who tried to teach the king, finally became his student. In the second a king arranges a competition between the wise men in his court, and Yajñavalkya, one of the leading characters of the prose *Upaniṣads*, challenges others with a self-assured gesture and then beats them in a dispute. In the third this same Yajñavalkya goes to the king and gets a manifold reward by a clever ruse, quoting with a fake humility one master after another and refuting their arguments. The fourth example is different: the radical wisdom it contains is not as much philosophical as it is social: one's class and family do not matter if one is a true seeker of truth.

These small narratives are presented by the fictive narrator of the text; in some cases (examples 1-3) they introduce the philosophical argument inside a narrative or after an introductory narrative, and in some, rarer cases (4) they are independent "parables" which give a moral lesson in the form of a narrative, similar to the tales of Joseph and Job in the Bible. There are characters in the *Upaniṣads* who emerge as personalities (Yajñavalkya and his wife, Uddālaka Āruṇi and his son Naciketas etc.) but the sphere of their action is predominantly philosophical discussion, and "events" are similar to the passages 1-4. The last narrative is embedded in a general philosophical frame, but most of the others, like 1-3, serve as settings for learned discussion. They create a *situation* in which the discussion can take place and lead to a successful result. They also build up the authority of the teachers that promote the message of the *Upaniṣads*. They may have humorous touches, like 2 and 3, and intellectual rivalry between wise men is a usual topic. The structure of the upaniṣadic frame is an exact inversion of the outermost frame in the *Mahābhārata*. In the Epic the ritual of the priests provides the situation in which a narrative is told. In the *Upaniṣads* the narrative provides the situation in which a philosophical dialogue takes place.[584]

[583] All translations are by Roebuck.
[584] The similarities between the *upaniṣads* and the dialogues of Plato are obvious.

The *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads* were both prominent literary models for framing one text by another text and creating a convincing and elegant nexus between them by using literary techniques. It is quite conceivable that they could have influenced the frame structures of the *Mahābhārata*, especially the "Dharma" section (major books 12 and 13) the frame of which looks like an *Upaniṣad*.

Let us now look closer at the (exegetical) frame of the *Brāhmaṇas*. In it the speaker / exegetical narrator describes and explains the rituals and chants and their background. The style of the argumentation includes elevating the ritual detail by "esoteric significance, divine connection or relations with the soma rites"[585]. The delivery of the narrator contains, in addition to the bigger chunks of embedded narratives, verses lifted from the *Ṛgveda*. Most of the time the Ṛgvedic quotations are not inserted in the text to be explained, like the rituals, but for another reason. According to Gonda "[...] they [= the authors of the *Brāhmaṇas*] liked to quote the latter [= the Ṛgvedic poets] in order to establish a connection with the wisdom of *ṛṣis* and to corroborate their own views."[586] They were used similarly, to forge a connection and by this, to gain authority, in the late Vedic liturgy. In addition to these functions, the Ṛgvedic quotations of the embedded narratives in the *Brāhmaṇas*, as was seen e.g. in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa, act as a "shadow narrative" or a skeleton on which the new narrative is built on.

But there are also other kinds of "quotations" in the exegetical frame. In spite of the fact that there is only one general speaker / narrator in the text, the exegetical frame takes often the mode of a disputation.[587] The speaker refers to other opinions, sometimes by giving names, quotes them verbatim and lets the different opinions converse with each other. This way of argumentation continues the disputative style of the Ṛgvedic *saṃvādas* and is affiliated with the philosophical dialogues of the *Upaniṣads*. The frame is a conversational frame, not a pure description or argumentation.

The polyphony of voices increases in the later texts. Next example is from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (1.1.1.7-10). The participants of the discussion are given in italics, and the "frame" (or voice) of the exegetic narrator, in which he introduces the subject and gives his own opinion after having listened to others, is indicated by bold letters.

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[585] Gonda 1975: 370-371. Equally important were magical equivalences and numerical classifications.
[586] Gonda 1975: 369.
[587] I noted above that the Ṛgvedic dialogues are often disputations.

7. **Now then, the eating [or] fasting. And on this matter** *Āṣāḍha Sāvayasa*, **for his part, was of the opinion that the vow concerns fasting. For surely** [he said]: "The gods see into the mind of the man: they know that when he has made a vow, he means to sacrifice to them the next morning. Because of this all the gods come to his house, and stay by [Sanskr. upa-vas-], and this is the reason why this [day] is called "upavasatha".
8. Now, as it would not be proper for him to take food before men [= his guests] have eaten, all the more improper it is to take food before the gods have eaten. So, let him take no food at all."
9. *Yajñavalkya* **said, on the other hand**: "If he does not eat, he will by this be sacrificing to the Manes: and if he does not eat, he eats before the gods have eaten." **So let him eat that which, when eaten, does not count as having been eaten. Thus when he eats, he does not sacrifice to the Manes, and by eating of that which no offering is made of, he does not [actually] eat before the gods have eaten.**
10. **Therefore let him eat only that which grows in the forest, either forest plants or the fruit of the trees. On this matter** *Barku Vārṣṇa* **said**: "Cook beans for me, because they are not offered in sacrifice!" **However, he should not do this, for beans are served with rice and barley, and thus he allows also for rice and barley. Thus, let him eat only that which grows in the forest.**

Here the speaker (whom I have chosen to call the exegetical narrator) presents the opinions of three authorities on ritual matters, lets them discuss with each other in their own voices, joins the discussion by summarizing and weighing their views and finally says his opinion. The narrator, even though he does not give his name, is thus a participant in a discussion with other authorities about the meaning of the ritual and correct interpretation of the rules that guide it. He resembles a moderator in a panel, but like Yajñavalkya and Socrates, he is the one who knows the right answers. And like Yajñavalkya of the *Upaniṣads* and Socrates of Plato's dialogues, he is fictional. As a narrator he is a tool in the structure of the text to convey meaning. The other speakers are also fictional: they are based on real authorities, but in the text of the *Brāhmaṇa* they are re-created by the narrator who has chosen the opinions they pronounce and the context in which they are brought into the discussion. In this way they are characters of a narrative that is narrated by the exegetical narrator. So like the frame of the *Upaniṣads*, the frame of the *Brāhmaṇas*, as a text, is a description that has narrative qualities. This brings it closer to the Epic and Classical models.

Like the "pseudo-oral discourse" in the frames of the *Mahābhārata*, this type of frame has its roots in an oral prototype. Again the theories of Monika Fludernik are helpful. Discussing conversational storytelling she says: "It could be argued that anecdotes, exempla, parables and similar short narrative forms introduced into sermons,

speeches and lectures constitute an intermediate type of oral narration."[588] Fludernik sees that in this type of discourse, which have inserted narratives, it is usual to have one dominant speaker, which is exactly the case in the earlier *Brāhmaṇas*. In the later *Brāhmaṇas* other voices join in and the frame becomes a real conversation, as seen in the example above.

Looking at the exegetical frame from this point of view, the embedded narratives present "anecdotes", "exampla" and "parables" to enrich the speech or discussion that goes on in the frame. Now it can be seen that the framing devices of the *Brāhmaṇas* have quite a many things in common with later frames. First, an example of an introduction and a frame of a narrative in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (III.1.3.1- 5.), which is late. The embedded story is in italic and the quotation from the *Ṛgveda* is marked with bold italic. The normal text is the frame.

(1) Having brought water, he prepares a cake on eleven potsherds for Agni and Viṣṇu. For Agni is All-gods: it is fire [agni] in which the offering is given to All-gods. And Agni is also the lower half and Viṣṇu is the upper half of the sacrifice. He is thinking: "I will become consecrated after encompassing All-gods, after encompassing the entire sacrifice." This is why there is a cake on eleven potsherds for Agni and Viṣṇu.

(2) Some offer after this a rice-pap to the Ādityas. This is the reference: "***Eight sons of Aditi were born from her body: with seven she went to the gods, but she cast off Mārtāṅḍa****."*[589]

(3*) Now, Aditi had eight sons. However, only seven of these were called 'the gods, the sons of Aditi'. The eighth, Mārtāṅḍa, came from her unformed. It was nothing but a lump of flesh, as broad as it was high. But some say that he was of the size of a man.*

(4)Then the gods, sons of Aditi, said, "That which was born after us must not be lost: come, let us mould it." And thus they moulded it to have the form of a man. The flesh which was cut off and thrown aside, it became the elephant. Therefore they say that one must not accept an elephant [as a gift], the reason being that the elephant has been cut off from a man*. He whom they moulded was Vivasvat, the Āditya (or the sun); and of him [were born] all these creatures.*

*(5) He said: "Those among my offspring will be successful who shall offer that rice-pap to the Ādityas***."** This is the reason why he alone succeeds who offers that rice-pap to the Ādityas. However, only that (cake) to Agni and Viṣṇu is generally approved.

[588] Fludernik 2009: 65.

[589] The *Ṛgveda* X.72.8. The goddess Aditi is in the *Ṛgveda* mentioned almost always with her sons, the Ādityas. Mitra, Varuṇa, Aryaman and Dakṣa are among these. The deformed and refashioned son Mārtāṅḍa is connected with the sun, and the word Āditya took later this meaning.

In this passage the exegetical narrator describes first the usual ritual procedure: a cake for Agni and Viṣṇu. Then he tells that some add to this a rice-pap for the Ādityas: so there is another way to do the ritual, another opinion. The narrator follows this other opinion, even though it is not "generally approved" like the cake for Agni and Viṣṇu, and quotes a verse in the *Ṛgveda*, after which he goes even further, opens the Ṛgvedic reference and tells a story about Aditi and her sons, which gives support to the addition of the rice-pap offering (one of Aditi's sons has recommended this offering). Moreover, the narrative explains the unsuitability of an elephant for a [sacrificial] gift. The sub-story of the origin of elephants is an extra motif in the Aditi narrative, and the ritual explanation for it seems to be an ad hoc addition. The motif of a deformed child who is born more or less as a lump of flesh surfaces later in the *Mahābhārata*.[590]

Here the interesting thing is rhetorical sequence leading to the embedded narrative and out of it. It can be presented like this: (i) the description of the usual practice, (ii) the introduction of a particular practice, (iii) a quotation of a Ṛgvedic verse connected to that particular practice, (iv) the narrative that explains the quotation and the particular practice, and finally (v) an affirmation of the explanation.

The passage can be compared to the rhetoric displayed by the dialogue of the jackals Karaṭaka and Damanaka in the frame story of the first book of the *Pañcatantra*. Here is an excerpt from the text of the *Tantrākhyāyika*[591] (I. 56-62, tales I. 4-6). The jackals are discussing the right way to act and start by analyzing the concepts of evil and vice.

Damanaka said: [...] "Now, Piṅgalaka[592] is in a state of vice. He must be separated from that [Saṃjīvaka].

'When a ruler is blinded by vice, his servants, as it is described in the science [of politics],
must do their utmost to correct his ways.'"

Karaṭaka said: "What kind of vice has our master Piṅgalaka? For there are seven vices in this world:

'Women, dice and hunting, drinking and rude speech are five [vices];
harsh punishments as well, and grasping by force the property [of others].'"

Damanaka said: "My friend, there is only one vice."

Karaṭaka said: "How is it possible that there is only one vice?"

Damanaka said: "There are five basic evil things, Lack, Chaos, Vice, Distress and Bad Policy."

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[590] In the first frame, in the narrative of Kadrū and Vinatā, the first son of the latter is born deformed, and the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra's hundred sons are born first as a big lump of flesh.

[591] This is one the oldest versions of the *Pañcatantra*.

[592] The frame narrative of the Book I tells of the friendship and mutual trust of the lion king Piṅgalaka and the bull Saṃjīvaka which is destroyed by the two jackals. The jackals want to re-establish the old "natural" regime in which the jackals are the ministers of the lion king.

Karaṭaka said: "What is the distinction between these?"
Damanaka [said]: "There is Lack when one of the following is missing: ruler, minister, ally, stronghold, army, treasury and the hand of law. When the external or internal elements [in a system] are fighting against each other, it is Chaos. Vice I have already explained. In it there is a group of four, which is based on desire, and a group of three, which is based on wrath. Those based on pleasure are easy to understand. I will now address the group of three, based on wrath. The wrath of speech it is when one always points out the faults in others. Needless penalties of death, or imprisonment, or mutilation: these are the wrath of punishment. If one constantly wants to possess that which belongs to others, it is the wrath of property. Distress has eight forms. These are bad luck, fire, water, disease, pestilence, cholera, famine, and Āsurī rain. The last-mentioned means excessive rain or no rain at all. These are modes of Distress. When the six forms of policy, namely peace, war, march, policy of wait and see, alliance with a powerful helper, and duplicity, are not applied properly, so that the ruler goes to war when peace is better, or holds peace when war is better, or otherwise is not versed in the six forms of policy: this is Bad Policy. That is why Piṅgalaka must be separated from Saṃjīvaka. There is no light without a lantern."
Karaṭaka [said]: "How can you separate them, when you have no power?"
Damanaka [said]: "Dear friend:

'***That which is not possible to acquire with power can be done with a guile,***
[as] Madam Crow was able to kill the snake with a gold chain.'"

Karaṭaka [said]: "How was that?"
Damanaka [tells "*the narrative of the Crows and the Snake*" (1): *in it a female crow, with the advice of her friend the jackal, killed a snake that was always eating her offspring. It includes a secondary embedding, "the narrative of the Heron and the Crab" (2), which is told by the jackal in the story (1): it reiterates the principle that a strong enemy can be destroyed by a ruse. After (2) the first narrative continues and is finished*.]
Damanaka [said, after finishing the (1)]: "Therefore I say: 'That which is not possible to acquire with power', and so on.[593]

The level of the embedded narratives, here only summarized, is marked with italics and the "story-verse" (*kathāsaṃgraha*, see below) is marked with bold and italic.

Most of the narratives of the first book of the *Pañcatantra* are embedded in a discussion like that given above. One of the two jackals gives a lecture on ethics or statecraft and pronounces then a proposition concerning wise conduct. The proposition may be backed first by several gnomic "*ākhyāna*" verses, but then comes inevitably a quatrain which refers to a special case where the proposed way of action has successfully applied or an action that is not recommended had unhappy consequences. This quatrain is called *kathāsaṃgraha* ("a-summary-of-the-story"). The summary is then followed by

[593] My translation.

the embedded narrative.[594] The sequence of "persuasive argument" of the example above is almost similar to that of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*: (i) a description of ethical background and then a particular dilemma, (ii) a proposition to solve the dilemma, (iii) a quatrain which refers to the application of the proposed action, (iv) the narrative which explains the quotrain and gives credence to the proposed action, and (v) an affirmation of the wisdom of the proposed action.

The examples in this chapter show that there is strong similarity between the conversational frames of the earlier texts (the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*) and those of the later texts (the *Pañcatantra*), and the introductory verses and the embedded narratives are used in the same way in the *Brāhmaṇas* and in the *Pañcatantra*. The Ṛgvedic quotation acts in the *Brāhmaṇas* as a trigger to (ask and) tell an embedded narrative in the same was as the "story-verse" in the *Pañcatantra*. They also prove that it is justified to treat the (exegetical) frame in the *Brāhmaṇas* as a real frame in the frame narrative. The narrator acts as a character in the dialogue with the other authorities, and when he tells a story, it is not an episode on the level of the frame, but a subordinated narrative taking place in the "quoted world".

Thus there are two basic narrative levels in the *Brāhmaṇas*, the frame and the (main) embedded narrative. The embedded narrative may have a composite and complex structure, like the narratives of Cyavana and Śunaḥśepa. In the former "the narrative of the Aśvins, Dadhyañc, Indra and the sacrifice of the gods" is a sub-story of "the narrative of the rejuvenation of Cyavana" which forms a frame around it. Similarly the narrative of Śunaḥśepa is composed of a central episode with embedded Ṛgvedic verses ("the rescue of Śunaḥśepa") and two separate narratives that frame it as a prologue and an epilogue, and these three narratives are knit together by a continuous plot and a common theme of sons and fathers. There is no "marked" separate narrator for the separate narratives, though. The narrative of Śunaḥśepa can be said to have an exegetical narrator and a story narrator (see above) but the latter is not formally introduces and established. So, if the definition of the frame story requires that there must be a marked secondary narrator for the sub-story, there are no secondary embeddings. The structure in these texts, however,

[594] This particular sequence (a summary followed by the story in full) is also typical of the *Mahābhārata*. See the chapter 3.2.1 below. So it could have been borrowed to the *Pañcatantra* from the Epic. On the other hand the use of the *kathāsaṃgraha* resembles very much the procedure with which the *Brāhmaṇas* use the Ṛgvedic verses as the thumbnail memos or sketches on which the embedded narrative is built on. In the *Jātakas* the story consists of a *gāthā*, which may be a summary, and the prose narrative serves as a commentary to it. It is hard to say what has been taken from where. But the *Brāhmaṇas* are older than *Jātakas* or the *Mahābhārata*.

is clearly that of a frame and an embedding, and these many-layered narratives, as well as the proto-frames of the Ṛgvedic hymns, must be taken into account when searching for the origin of the frame story.

2.7. The Vedic model

In the two preceding chapters I have analysed the narrators and the levels of the early and later Vedic texts. I will end this section by giving a short summary the results and proposing "a Vedic model" for the frame narrative.

First, some general remarks. It is not practical to give an exact date for the "invention" of the frame story in India. It is nearly as misguided to say that it was invented already in the Vedic age as to say that the authors of the *Mahābhārata* were the first to use the frame narrative. The frame story in India was not an invention, but a product of textual and cultural practices that evolved during a long period of time. The first signs of these practices are already visible in the *Ṛgveda*. Hymns that use tripartite structures often have a middle section containing a fragment of a myth or series of references and allusions to myths. In addition, hymns may have been composed using parts of different origin, so that the shifts of level have been infiltrated the texts in this way. In the monologues and the dialogues the practice of planting texts inside other texts is evident. The composers show considerable skill and are self-conscious of what they are doing. The self-consciousness shows e.g. in the rhetorical metalepses in the hymns.

It cannot be firmly proved that the dramatic verses of the *Ṛgveda* were copied from old type of literature where the verses were fixed and the prose around them was improvised, as the *ākhyāna* theory would require, but it is clear that they have been taken from narrative tradition. The composers on the *Brāhmaṇas* must also have had a oral tradition at their disposal and used it to retell stories that could be fitted in the exegesis. If they found a Ṛgvedic narrative there, it had been probably changed a lot during countless retellings. They could have taken the story straight from the *Ṛgveda* and invented what they thought was missing. As we have seen, they were quite skillful storytellers. They may have wanted to tell the story in their own way once they had the privilege to fix it by putting it into a literary form. But in many cases, e.g. in the narrative

of Madam Long-Tongue (see pp. 92-93), it is difficult to say what was borrowed from where and what was invented. All that the *Ṛgveda* has is a stray dog that is driven away so that it would not gobble up the ritual food.

By the time of the *Brāhmaṇas* the practice of incorporating old texts within new texts had been established. The verses of the *Ṛgveda* were quoted not only in rituals, but also in the literary texts that explained and analyzed them or put them in to lend authority to these younger texts. In the narratives of the *Brāhmaṇas* the Vedic dialogues could be braided very intricately inside the new narrative to give it evocative power, like in the narrative of Purūravas and Urvaśī in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. The old legends that hymns of the *Ṛgveda* only referred to, like the those of Cyavana and Śunaḥśepa, were developed to many-layered, full-scale narratives. And they all could be fitted in the frame of theological argument and discussion that had prestige and could carry them on by making them a part of tradition.

It is important to keep in mind that all these texts belong to a *literary* tradition. Our culture, that does not appreciate learning by heart and has elevated the written word to the position where it is the sole representative of the literary, mixes very easily "the oral" with "the folklore". Vedic texts were orally transmitted for many centuries, but they represent literary culture.[595] The roots of some brāhmaṇic narratives may be in folktales, but they lost this connection when they were retold in Sanskrit and put into literary context.[596] Even though the motifs and structures of the narratives have been studied earlier by folklorists, they are also literary motifs and can be present in the high literature.

The Vedic model of the frame narrative is not one, but consists of several variants. In the "proto-framing" of the Ṛgvedic poetry there are the alternatives of an *omphalos* or composite structure or the rarer monologue/dialogue structure. Both show development towards a real frame. For example the narrative of Apalā, in spite of its shortness, has many features of a frame narrative. This appears in a more complete form in the *Brāhmaṇas* where there is a clear structure of a frame and an embedded narrative. This early frame is not a pure narrative: it is a conversational frame. But this type of frame

[595] See the chapter 2.1.2.

[596] As a rule it is quite useless to try to trace the folktale origins of literary narratives in the *Brāhmaṇas*, in the epics, in the *Jātakas*, in the *Pañcatantra* etc., or elaborate this connection. All we have are the fixed literary narratives and the "folklore" part is mere speculation. However, it is interesting and worth while to analyse the devices that try to evoke the actual narrative situation in the *Mahābhārata* and other later texts.

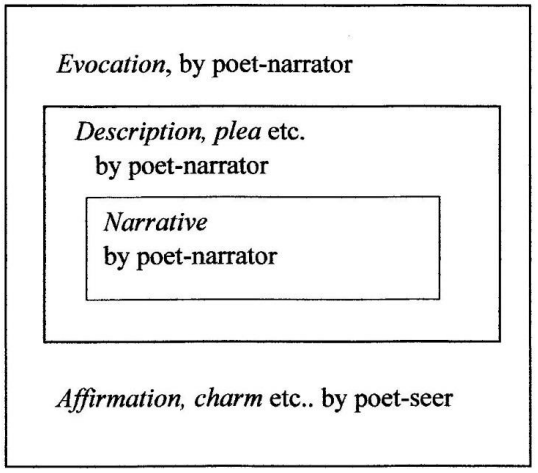
is similar to the frames of the classical frame story collections, where the frames are often also conversational.

I present the Vedic model in diagrams below (Diagram 6). These representations are radically simplified: the Ṛgvedic type shows a great variance and the brāhmaṇic type can be very complex, as seen in the narratives of Cyavana and Śunaḥśepa. The first Ṛgvedic variant represents most of all the composite hymns, the *omphalos* hymns and the monologues, but it can be applied also to some other types. The second variant describes the dialogue hymns. The exegetical frame of the brāhmaṇic type often contains an internal dialogue and other narrators (this was discussed in 2.6.) but this is hard to indicate this in a diagram.

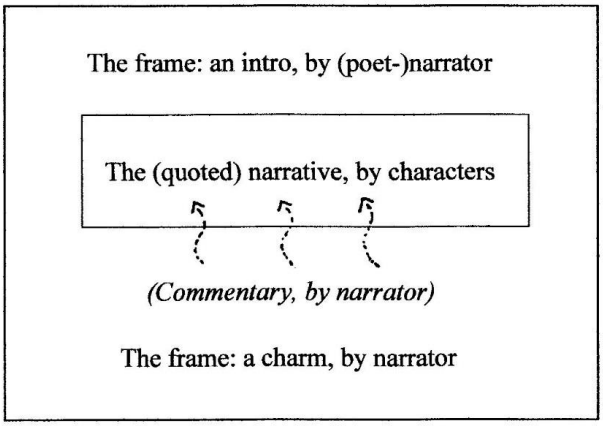
Diagram 6. The Vedic model.

A. The *Ṛgveda*.

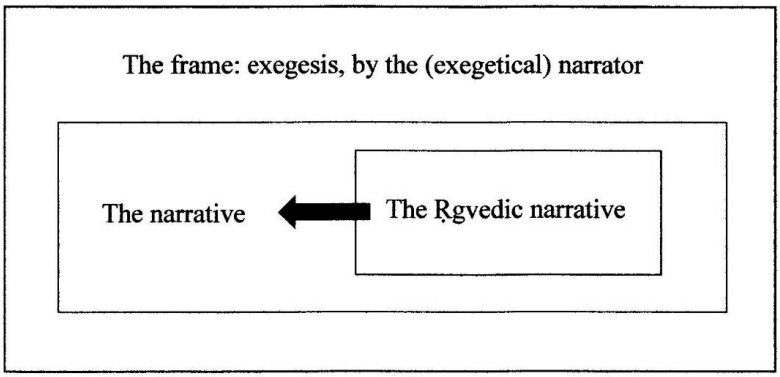
Variant 1.



Variant 2.



B. The *Brāhmaṇas*.



Among the interesting features of early frame narratives is the mixture of prose and verse. This was mostly achieved by quoting Ṛgvedic verses. But the story of the Śunaḥśepa with its gnomic and narrative *gāthas* may be regarded as the definite forerunner of the *miśra* narratives of the *Pañcatantra* cycle.

Other parts of the literary tradition cultivated also the practice of putting a text inside other text. The commentaries carried the old texts inside them. After principles of sciences and philosophical schools had been summarized in short and precise *sūtras*, they continued their life in commentaries that enveloped each of them with explanations. Many types of texts developed like trees that grow annual rings around them. The stage was set for the greatest frame narrative of them all.

3. IN THE MAZE: THE EPIC MODEL

3.1. The overall scheme of the Mahābhārata

The *Mahābhārata* (from hence MBh) is such a huge literary work that all of its frames or tales cannot be discussed and analyzed in detail in this kind of a study. But as the work is extremely important for the history and development of the frame story, the idea is to cover most that is relevant. In this part of the study I will look at the two outer frames, other larger frames and and some of their subtales to inspect what kind of frames, levels, narrators and narrative situations the epic contains. It is also relevant to discuss the concepts of narrative time, "the author" and "the literary work" in connection with the MBh.[597]

The nature and scope of the MBh has already been touched upon in the introduction which also shortly describes the research tradition behind it (pp. 34-35)[598], and the text has featured briefly as a comparison in the discussion on the Vedic model in the section 2. My approach here will be mostly synchronic. As the oldest manuscripts agree on the existence and content of the two outer frames and those other parts of the MBh that I wish to inspect,[599] it is practical to analyse the work as a whole. This spares me some of the tangled argument about the "right way to analyse" the MBh. However, as I have, when discussing the narratives of the *Brāhmaṇas*, compared them to their versions in the MBh, the chronological relation of these is clear and backed by various kinds of evidence. It is also self-evident that the Vedic frame structures, both those of the *Ṛgveda* and those of the *Brāhmaṇas*, are earlier than the frame structures of the MBh. Otherwise there would be no sense to talk about "development" or "evolvement".[600]

In many studies the consolidation of the form of the MBh has been placed between the 5th century BCE and the 5th century CE: a time span as wide as this

[597] The standard way to refer to the MBh is to give the number of the major book, the chapter and the stanza/prose unit. In the outer frame of Ugraśravas (marked later as F(I)), however, the division to the minor books is more important, so this too shall be taken into account.
[598] A useful summary of the Epic studies is Brockington 1998 (41-81). As it does not cover the 2000's, e.g. most of the work of Alf Hiltebeitel is not taken into account.
[599] Sukthankar 1933: lxxvii. See also Dunham 1991.
[600] As regards the "floating mass" of narratives (see p. 169) there is naturally much overlapping.

presupposes several phases, but it has been notoriously difficult to define what the phases that lead to the present form of the epic would have been, and the genealogical approach has during last decades been met with sharp criticism. Hiltebeitel claims that the present text was composed by a group of authors in a much shorter time, i.e. not longer than two generations (50-60 years).[601] His theory may be true, because the work shows remarkable unity for a text of this size.[602] It is another question from where the material of these authors came and in what particular form. There must have been processes of accumulation, combining and reshaping. And in spite of the unity, there are many inconsistencies in the text.

In explaining these, scholars have taken two positions that correspond their positions in the question of the genesis of the MBh. John D. Smith describes this polarization thus: "They [= the scholars] have either viewed them [= inconsistencies] as an evidence of textual changes over time, typically the not wholly successful insertion of later section into an earlier piece of text, or they have interpreted them as showing subtleties of character in the heroes of the epic."[603] This applies also to such structural inconsistencies like the double introduction in the outermost frame of the MBh: they are interpreted either as end-products of interpolation or as subtleties of the plot and structure.

In this study one of central ideas is the preservation of old texts inside new texts. So it would appear logical to presume that in the MBh the embeddings are older than the frames. However, it is hard and at many times impossible to follow the trail of the material that has ended up in the MBh, and thus the relation of the frames and the embeddings within it can be complicated. Some versions of the frame can positively be older than some versions of the embeddings. So one must tread softly. The question of the shift from the oral to the literary cuts also deep through our ideas of the MBh.[604] Even though epics are "primarily transmitted through oral performance", they "develop [everywhere] in or in contact with literate cultures".[605] The MBh is a particularly interesting example of the mixing of oral, pseudo-oral and literary expression.

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[601] Hiltebeitel 2001a: 20, 29; 2005: 81-111.
[602] Less believable is his idea that there has been a committee of experts of various subjects that would have composed the text. - The uniformity of the MBh may be connected with its semi-religious status: as Blackburn says, ritualistic performances (which the MBh itself seems to propose with its frames) require "a high level of textual fixity", whereas performances that are predominantly entertainment allow greater freedom for improvisation (Blackburn 1989: 31).
[603] Smith 2009: 105.
[604] See the chapter 2.1.2. p. 49-51.
[605] Blackburn and Flueckiger 1989: 10. The second sentence is a quotation from Ruth Finnegan's groundbreaking study on oral poetry (1977).

Luckily the approach taken here does not require making conjectures about the relative age of various parts of the work. Recognizing and analyzing the levels and layers of the text does not imply that any of them is "the original and true". We do not have any versions of the complete text that can be proved to be earlier, only the sources and the final work. All we can see now is how these layers work together. Especially the two outer frames are so solidly woven into the weblike structure of the MBh that the venture to pull the structure into such pieces that represent various earlier versions will always be problematical. The only chronology that is established is that which concerns the relation of the MBh to other narrative works. The other way to get round the chronological problem is to treat the MBh not only as a single text but as a larger phenomenon: a literary phase. This is quite possible because text embraces both "the Epic model" and the older "the conversational model", as will be seen.

I will go deeper in the matters of genesis of the MBh only to open again the case of the ritual model for the frames of the MBh that Minkowski has proposed. This sequel shall follow in the chapter 3.4., after the analysis. Otherwise the discussion concentrates on the structures, i.e., to the levels and the narrators, their properties and their functions. So, when there is talk about parallel narratives, it does not mean that one of them is the original text and the other an interpolation. Sometimes it can be proved that a narrative is taken from the *Brāhmaṇas*, sometimes not: the uncertainty is caused by the floating mass[606] of oral and oral-literary narratives behind fixed literary works that is only partially visible. The expression "the main story" or "the main narrative" implies that this is the section of the work that everyone recognizes to be "the story of the war" which is "plot-wise" and "character-wise" the centre of the work from which the other parts take their impetus.[607] However, the two outer frames and the philosophical passages are features that, together with the embedded narratives, testify for the continuity of a broad textual and narrative tradition.

This study concentrates on the narrative structures, so interpretations that do not contribute to this are left out. All meanings cannot be ignored: the relation of the frame and the embedding cannot be discussed without knowing why, in the first place, they are coupled, and this requires the inspection of their respective functions, themes and motifs.

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[606] See the chapters 2.1.2 and 2.2.1 above.

[607] This statement does not say anything about the respective literary value of the parts. It would not be sound scholarship to maintain that the main narrative is older and therefore "more relevant", and consequently the rest of the work would be irrelevant, something that could be taken away. — More of "the many MBh:s" in the chapter 3.3.3.

But one need not try to explain everything to do this. The emphasis on the unity and careful planning of the MBh often leads the scholars of "the subtlety school" to find deep meaning, coherence and connection in every part of the work. This is unnecessary and many times misleading. Indeed there is much meaning, coherence and connection in the MBh, but there are also inconsistencies and superfluities: e.g. it is not clear why the story of Bhṛgu and Agni begins the minor book 4, or why the story of Uttaṅka has a prologue that looks like a part of another story (see chapters 3.1.1. and 3.2.1 below). These narrative fractures should not regarded not as much as faults but as testimony of the methods with which the MBh was composed. I believe that the solution of "paratactic aggregates" that Smith suggests in his articles[608] has much to offer to the analysis of the structures as well, and I shall return to it when I talk about "the levels" in 3.2.1. and 3.2.2.

First, some kind of an idea of the general structure of the MBh must be given. There are two outer frames, and embedded inside them there is the long narrative of the breach of the Bhārata clan[609] and the war to which it leads: this embedding includes the back-story of the characters, the development of enmity between rivals for the kingship, the final battle and its disastrous outcome. Interwoven in the plot there are couple of basic philosophical themes that extend both to the outer frames and to the sub-plots inside, plus a multitude of other, smaller strands of thought which are more sporadic and digressive. A big theme is the teaching of *dharma*[610] to the *kṣatriya* (warrior) caste. This is achieved by several means: by moral problems that the characters face, by the main plot which heads for imminent destruction, by the content of the subtales[611] and two long passages, the *Bhagavadgītā* (6: 25-42) and the ethical lessons of Bhīṣma (the books 12 and 13). A

[608] 1999, 2009. By the "paratactic aggregates" Smith means that archaic narratives (e.g. the epics of Homer) have a tendency to "tack on" seemingly inconsistent features of the character side by side without thinking that they will become inconsistent in that particular context. So in the same context (MBh 6: 54 and 55, 102) Arjuna is a great warrior who attacks Bhīṣma, and Arjuna respects and loves Bhīṣma and is accused of not attacking him (Smith 2009: 101-105).

[609] Bharata or Bhārata (patronyme) is the general name for the clan of kings in the Epic and the name of the work comes from it. The clan is mentioned already in the *Ṛgveda*. Bharata, the mythical ancestor, is the son of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta, the pair of lovers introduced in the MBh 1.62-69. and made famous by the drama *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kālidāsa (5th century CE). The two branches of the clan that are in war over the kingdom of Kuru are the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. The first are "the baddies" and the second "the goodies", but the plot makes this dualism complicated. The actions of "the goodies", are sometimes reprehensible and the allies of "the baddies" are mostly noble and virtuous. The action in the Epic takes about one third of the text: the narrative qualities of other parts, which are more concerned on philosophical or ontological matters, are lower. This too connects it clearly with the literature that preceded it (the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*). See 3.4. and 3.6. below.

[610] See p. 33 n. 141, and Hiltebeitel 2011.

[611] E.g. by the repetitive narrative of the Bhārgava Rāma and the Bhṛgu clan; see p. 174 n. 625.

message of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence)[612] is driven home by the catastrophic outcome of the war.

The second of the outer frames provides a mirror for the ethical scheme of the work. Mirroring is found also in the subtales (*upākhyāna*) that are embedded in the main plot (67 in all, not counting the embedded tales which form the F(I)).[613] E.g. the romance of Nala who gambles off his kingdom and his wife is narrated to Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest Pāṇḍava brother and a king, who has lost his possessions in the same way.

The work is divided to 18 major books (*parvan*) and also to 100 minor books (*upaparvan*).[614] In addition, the work is divided into chapters (*ādhyāya*). The titles of the minor books and the chapters and the short synopses that are given in the introductory part serve as an organizing principle and also as a guide for the reading of the text.[615] The major book 12 (*Śāntiparvan*, 353 chapters), the major book 3 (*Āraṇyakaparvan*, 298) and the major book 1 (*Ādiparvan*, 225) have the largest number of chapters, and the books 1 and 3 have the largest number of *upaparvans* (19 and 16). These two books, together with the books 12 and 13, contain also most of the embedded narratives.[616] The MBh is written predominantly in verse and the domineering metre is *śloka*, which is regular, speechlike and adaptable.[617] Some passages, like the minor book 3, are in prose. The captions that indicate the narrators are usually spoken outside the verse (*extra metrum*).

The first of the outer frames (F(I) from hence) covers the minor books 1-5 and the beginning of the minor book 6 in the major book 1. The second outer frame (F(II) from hence) begins in the minor book 6 and envelops the rest of the MBh (minor books 6-98). F(I) and F(II) have each their own narrators and audiences/narratees. In addition to the bulk of the main narrative ("the main plot"), they contain other embedded narratives.

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[612] *Ahiṃsā* was introduced to the Epic culture during the competition of the late Vedic religion and the new ideological trends, Buddhism and especially Jainism which emphasized this virtue. The question of its discord with the requirements of the *dharma* is present in the MBh in many ways, even as the problem first rises in the narrative when one is driven to break the rules of non-violence against one's own kin.
[613] See Hiltebeitel 2005: 467-469.
[614] The *Harivaṃśa* which tells of the clan of Kṛṣṇa is an appendage ("the 19th book" and minor book 99) of the MBh. It is not included in this discussion.
[615] See 3.3.3. below.
[616] The book 1 has eleven subtales, the book 3 twenty-one, the book 12 fourteen and the book 13 eleven. The book 5 has three, the book 6 has one, the book 8 has two, the book 9 two and the book 14 two. The other books (4, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17 and 18) do not have subtales. There are minor embedded narratives in some of these, but the four books with the most subtales have also most of the minor tales and episodes.
[617] The *śloka* consists of a couplet of halves that have sixteen syllables, divided forther into halves (*pādas*). The first four syllables of each *pāda* are free, the last four parsed. *Triṣṭubh* is also used. For the metres in the MBh, see Brockington 1998: 117-130.

Largest of the embeddings of F(II) are the "War" books 6-9, in which the narrator is the *sūta* Saṃjaya, and the "Dharma" books 12-13, in which the narrator is Bhīṣma.

The two outer frames of the MBh are central for this discussion.[618] They serve many purposes. They tell the history of the compilation and transmission of the MBh. They give a table of contents and a summary of the work. They highlight the narrative situation that imitates the act of storytelling in real world so that the narrating proceeds with (i) a dialogue of the narrator and the narratee and (ii) with two partly overlapping waves: first a summary, then the full story. Because of this, a prominent feature of the F(I) is the forth-back movement of narrating: narratives are interrupted to tell other narratives, and the earlier thread is picked up only after that. These suspended and diversive narratives intersect, and finally there is a mesh of narratives woven around the main plot.

Within the text as a whole, the narrative time is streched or compressed and levels are mixed: there are many analepses (flashbacks), prolepses (flash-forwards) and metalepses ("surprise visits" between the narrative levels). The tentative author, Vyāsa, is presented also as a narrated character in the text, so that he is both inside and outside his work. The description of the transmission and narrating of the MBh in the outer frames blurs the boundaries of the text. One is lead to ask which one is "the MBh": that which is narrated inside F(II), or that which is narrated inside the F(I), or the text that contains the major books 1-18?

3.1.1. The frame of Ugraśravas (F(I))

The *Ādiparvan* ("The Book of the Beginnings") begins with an anonymous announcement: "First bow to Nārāyaṇa and Nara[619], the paramount among men, and also

[618] The work of Mangels (1994) discusses analytically the frames and the narrators of the MBh. It has been an inspiration for this part of the study. It concentrates, however, most in the part of Saṃjaya and "the divine eye" whereas I am more interested in the first of the outer frames and the embeddings in the books 3, 6-9 and 12-13. The work of Hiltebeitel looms large behind the discussion of the frames, embeddings and subtales, even though I do not share all of his views. Other sources are mentioned individually in the footnotes.

[619] These are Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as divinities. The divinity of Kṛṣṇa is made clear in many parts of the MBh. Arjuna is the son of Indra, and his close relation with Kṛṣṇa is evident: the divine duo may have even earlier origin (both the names refer to colour, Kṛṣṇa is "black" and Arjuna "white").

the Goddess Sarasvatī, and then proclaim the Tale of Triumph". This is the voice of the fictive/primary narrator (see 3.3.1. below).[620] There is also a character-narrator on the primary level that the F(I) forms. This is Ugraśravas, the son of Lomaharṣana, referred to as "the Bard"[621], who appears straight after the invocation. The narrator tells that Ugraśravas arrives at the Naimiṣa Forest[622], where the *kulapati* ("leader of the group/clan") Śaunaka and a group of seers (*ṛṣis*) are performing a twelve-year ceremony (*sattra*). Śaunaka is not present but other seers come to meet Ugraśravas. After having asked where he has been, Ugraśravas tells that he has attended the snake sacrifice (*sarpasattra*) of king Janamejaya and listened how Vaiśampāyana narrated to Janamejaya the tales that were first taught by Vaiśampāyana's teacher Vyāsa, aka Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana[623], to his students. (Vaiśampāyana's narrative, which is embedded in the F(I), forms the F(II).)

Ugraśravas tells next that, after hearing the complete narrative told by Vaiśampāyana, he had made a pilgrimage to Samantapañcaka, where "once the war of the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas, and of all the kings of the earth"[624] had taken place.[625] Then

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[620] Hiltebeitel thinks that this unidentified overall narrator would be Vyāsa (2001a: 92-97). Others disagree (e.g. Fitzgerald 2003: 815-817).

[621] The word for the bard is *sūta* (in the Critical Edition; in the Vulgate the word is *sauti* ("son of a sūta"). *Sūtas* belonged to the *kṣatriya* (warrior) class and traditionally acted as charioteers. Vaiśaṃpāyana, the narrator of F(II), is a seer and a brahman and one of the four students of Vyāsa ("The Author"). *Sūtas* are seen as inferiors both by the seer-brahmans like Śaunaka and the ruling elite: the Pāṇḍavas deride Karṇa who has been brought up as a *sūta*. See 3.3.1. below.

[622] Hiltebeitel suggests that the Naimiṣa Forest is a celestial place (e.g. 2001a: 95-96). This is a plausible hypothesis: the first *sattra* of the gods is later told to have taken place in the same forest. On the other hand the name Naimiṣa, from *nimiṣ-* / *nimiṣa-*, refers to twinkling (momentary closing) of an eye (and from this, " a moment"), rather than twinkling of stars. The place might be a sort of dream or mirror land, a Forest of Arden, which exists on the same narrative level as the F(II) and the main plot, still being semi-mythical, as the exceedingly long *sattra* suggests. If the idea is that Ugraśravas is chronologically the last narrator and the first narration, by Vyāsa's disciples, took place in heaven (in 1.63-64 Vyāsa is said to first teach the MBh to his son Śuka and his disciples in his hermitage on Himalaya, and this little group then recited it to gods, gandharvas, Ancestors and other heavenly creatures), it is logical that the direction of the transmission of the work would be "downwards", not back upwards. Reich and also some others think that Naimiṣa Forest may have been a real place where subversive seers like Śaunaka held their rituals (Reich 2001: 147). At least it is real enough for the Pāṇḍavas to visit it during their pilgrimage in the book 3.

[623] From the beginning it is clear that most the narratees of the MBh are revealed or can be supposed already to know the work and the characters mentioned here, at least Vyāsa and Janamejaya, who both are relatives of the protagonists of the main narrative. See the chapters 3.3.2. and 3.3.3. Vyāsa is Janamejaya's grandfather's great-grandfather. See Diagram 11.

[624] Translation by van Buitenen. (From now on, all translations of the books 1-5 are his unless otherwise indicated.)

[625] Samantapañcaka had been a battlefield before this. Later (2.2-12) Ugraśravas will tell that in old times Bhārgava Rāma had slaughtered there (twenty-one times in succession) the race of tyrannical kṣatriyas and given their land to the brahmans. His father was Jamadagni, and Cyavana and Bhṛgu are his ancestors; the seer Viśvāmitra is also a member of this clan. Rāma's hate towards kṣatriyas arose when the king Kārtavīrya killed Jamadagni. Bhārgava Rāma and his clan are met throughout the MBh. They reflect the old violent warrior code that will destroy everything. See Fitzgerald 2002. The story of

he has come to the forest where they presently are. He asks what his listeners want to hear. The seers answer enthusiastically that they want to hear "the tales of Vyāsa" (the MBh). They praise these tales and elevate them to the status of an appendix to the Veda.[626]

Ugraśravas starts the telling of "the tales" by describing the origin of the cosmos, beginning from the large Egg that contains all universe, and the origin of the gods, and the threefold knowledge: Veda, *yoga* and science. He says these three are contained in "this Book" (the MBh). He says also that "there are brahmins who learn *The Bhārata* from Manu onward, others again from the tale of *The Book of Āstīka* (minor book 5) onward, others again from *The Tale of Uparicara* (minor book 6; 1.57) onward". This seems to refer to different redactions of the MBh that were in circulation.[627]

Next he tells about the life of Vyāsa, and the compilation that Vyāsa has made, and its first transmission.[628] After the death of the protagonists of the main story Vyāsa has "revealed" the MBh by first telling it to his son Śuka and to his other disciples, who then told the story to the gods, semi-gods and the ancestors. Then, by the request of king Janamejaya, Vyāsa has asked his disciple Vaiśampāyana to narrate it as it was taught to him.[629]

Then Ugraśravas plunges into "*The list of contents*". This is the first of the summaries of the MBh and it contains the main narrative.[630] It is given in two parts. The first part, beginning from Pāṇḍu[631], is told by Ugraśravas. The second part is three times longer and an embedded narrative. It describes events leading to the disastrous battle and

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Bhārgava Rāma is also told in the *Purāṇas*. - The other name of the Samantapañcaka is Kurukṣetra. It is in the heart of the old Kuru kingdom in the north-western India (see Witzel 2005: 24, 28-33).

626 "We wish to hear that Grand Collection, now joined to the Collections of the Four Vedas, which Vyāsa the miracle-monger compiled, replete with the law and dispelling all danger of evil!" Later, when the ancient seers weigh the Veda and the MBh in a scale, the latter is heavier (1.208-209).

627 This has been used as a proof to distinguish layers of different ages in the F(I) and F(II). See 3.2.1. and 3.3.3.

628 At this point the Vulgata version of the minor book 1 includes the story of how the MBh was written down (1.55-87 of Nīlakantha's text, translated in Sullivan 1999:118-119). Vyāsa goes to the god Brahmā who suggests that Vyāsa should dictate the MBh to the elephant god Gaṇeśa who then produces the first written version of the work. This popular story was added probably after the first written versions were made in the 10th century. It occurs in over a half of the manuscripts, but none of the southern manuscripts contains it. See Brown 1991: 71-72; Sullivan 11-13, 112-114.

629 It is told that Vyāsa composed first a version of 24 000 couplets, without sub-narratives, and "this is the portion that the learned call *the Bhārata* proper" (MBh 1.61.) and he has also made a summary of 150 couplets which is the *Book of the List of Contents* (which is in the present work the name of the first minor book). These various MBh:s are discussed in the chapter 3.3.3.

630 This is also attributed in the text to Vyāsa.

631 Pāṇḍu is the (nominal) father of the five Pāṇḍava brothers Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, who are the heroes of the main narrative.

the battle itself. Its form is special: it is a dirge which consists of repetitive formulas.[632] The narrator is a character in the main story, the old king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and the narratee is his charioteer Saṃjaya, who comments, after Dhṛtarāṣṭra finishes his lament, on what he has heard. Afther the king has spoken, Saṃjaya prevents him from killing himself. In the main narrative (the major books 6-10) the battle sequence is told the other way round, by Saṃjaya to the king.[633] This use of two mirrored narratives to describe the high point of the main plot shows the mastery of the composers of the MBh. Saṃjaya's speech in the summary introduces also the tragic message of the Epic. Time will devour all, even itself. Life will go on but all living things die. Ugraśravas ends the first minor book by praising the MBh. He calls it an *Upaniṣad* and says that if one learns even a quarter of a couplet of it, he is purified from all sins.

Two further summaries are presented in the second minor book, which is aptly named "*The Summaries of the Books*". First Ugraśravas tells a story about a former war in which the race of kṣatriyas was destroyed.[634] The hermits want to know also about the composition of the army in the Bhārata war. Only after this the Bard can give a list of the hundred minor books of the MBh.[635] Then he describes the contents of the 18 major books.[636] The subtales are also included. The descriptions are accurate and detailed but not very informative unless the narratee knows already the contents of the Epic.[637]

In the next three minor books (3-5), called *Pauṣya*, *Puloman* and *Āstīka*, Ugraśravas finally starts to tell stories. But they are back-stories, not the main story. And they are not back-stories of the main narrative, but back-stories of the narrative situation of the F(II): the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya. However, the characters of the main narrative are Janamejaya's ancestors, and even the Bhṛgus are related to him, so everything seems to be connected, if one goes far enough in the prehistory.[638] This

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[632] E.g. "When I heard that Yudhiṣṭhira had been defeated in a game of dice by Śakuni Saubala and was robbed of his kingdom, but was still followed by his enigmatic brothers: then, Sanjaya, I lost hope of victory." The last words are repeated after each remembered event. The king compresses the narrative of the feud into 55 stanzas (66 in the Vulgate).

[633] See the chapter 3.2.2.

[634] This is again the story of Bhārgava Rāma (Rāma Jāmadagnya). See p. 174 n. 625.

[635] He also says that he will tell "the full story of the Bhārata from the book of Puloman onward, as it was told in the Śaunaka's session", referring to his second visit.

[636] The division into the 100 minor books is said to have done by Vyāsa, but the system of the 18 books is attributed to Ugraśravas. Also the number of chapters and couplets in each book is given.

[637] See the chapter 3.3.3.

[638] The MBh is preoccupied with the ultimate causes of events. The ultimate cause of the snake sacrifice (F(II) is hunted through the minor books 3-5 of F(I), and the ultimate cause of the war of the Bhāratas is hunted through the early chapters of F(II). Even though this insistence on causation seems at first sight to point towards rational world-view, the result is that everything seems predetermined and predestined (see Earl 2011: 54-56). So it happens that the old king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, when hearing how his sons and their army

repeated recession backwards suggests a causal chain extending infinitely all the way to the genesis of the cosmos with which Ugraśravas began his discourse. It also makes one ask where these stories belong to, as they could not have been narrated in the narrative situation of the F(II) in which "the Mbh" was narrated. A further oddity is that the narrative situation is reinvoked with a change of audience in the beginning of the minor book 4 (Puloman). These questions are discussed in 3.2.1. and 3.3.3. below.

As if to mark the launching of the narrative mode, the book 3 is told in prose. There are other changes, too. In the first two books the summarized events are listed in chronological order, but in books 3-6 the strands of the narratives become increasingly tangled with each other. This is caused by the manner of narration from the book 4 onwards, in which the new narratee is very active. The narratee asks a question, the narrator gives a short answer, he is asked for a clarification, after which he amplifies his story, and then he is asked another question, which many times carries the story into another direction, and so on.[639] The narrative does not follow one straight trail but branches out in larger and larger loops or waves that break the sequentality of both the events and the narratives that tell about them. A story can be interrupted and picked up after a long time by another narrator in another narrative situation. Two of the embedded stories in these books have only a remote connection to other stories or to the main narrative. I will return to these peculiarities later, as well as provide a diagram (7a, p.) to illustrate how these stories are interrelated with each other and with the main story.

It is a daunting task both to describe and to try to grasp the content of the F(I). Still I believe this is important, as this part of the MBh emcompasses much of what is typical, genuine and innovative in this work. The minor books 1 and 2, as seen above, make clear how the text defines itself and organizes itself. The minor books 3, 4 and 5 that are tackled next give a thorough picture of the recursive, interactive and multilayered narrative technique of the MBh.

To make the following of the intricate storylines clearer, especially in the minor book 5, I provide a preliminary table of contents of the stories included in the F(I). In it one can see that the audience of Ugraśravas changes after the minor book 3. The

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are beaten in the battle, repeats over and over again that this is not as it should go, so this is fate playing its tricks, and Saṃjaya contradicts, reiterating that the king has caused all himself by his bad decisions; but at the end Saṃjaya changes his mind and confirms: this is fate. Because there was the ultimate cause (the war of gods and demons) for the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas to be enemies, Dhṛtarāṣṭra did not really have the option to act wisely.

[639] See 3.3.2. below.

interesting feature of the minor book 5 are the constant interruptions which send the narrator to tell one back-story after another. One storyline is interrupted when there comes a reference of another tale, and the main storyline is halted while this other story is told. But then this other story has a reference to a third tale, and the tale number two is halted to tell this tale. And so on. It would perhaps an overinterpretation to connect the sequence of multiple interruptions with the fact that the main story tells about a sacrifice which is interrupted, but this thought crosses the mind. The minor book 5 is eminently digressive, but some of its digressions lead to narratives which were to become the darlings of Indian mythology, like the churning of the milky ocean and the legend of the bird Garuḍa.

In the table of contents the interruption and digression are marked with an indentation and "+". A further digression is marked with a further indentation and "+" and so on. If there is an embedding, it is marked with ">", and the narrator and narratee are given. I have also added comments on the progress (or non-progress) of a story. It is to be noted that in this list I have paid attention to finer distictions in the continuity than in the "big picture" of the frames (Diagram 7a) which has so much other information. I will return to the digressions in p. 200-201 below.

To analyse how exactly the narratives in the book 5 are intertwined, I have given them numbers. The main story arc in the minor book 5 is "Āstīka and the snake sacrifice" (1), but this narrative is interrupted quite soon, and the tale of Āstīka's parents is taken up ("The story of Jaratkāru" (2)). This narrative is interrupted after it has proceeded almost to the end, and a cluster of back-stories (3-9) is told before (1) and (2) are completed. Two of the stories, "the story of Jaratkāru" and "the story of Parikṣit", are given in two versions.

All the stories of this book are explicitly connected to Janamejaya's snake sacrifice. Tales 3-9 explain why snakes are under a curse, and why Janamejaya hates snakes. Tales that frame them (1 and 2) tell how the snake sacrifice was interrupted and the curse lifted. This seems simple enough, but it is hard to keep the big picture in mind once one has entered the labyrinth of narration.

The narrators and stories in minor books 1-5 of the MBh

Minor books 1-3

narrator: Ugraśravas — narratees: Śaunaka's priests

Minor books 1-2:
"How Ugraśravas heard the MBh being told"
"The mini-stories of the Summaries"
> "The story of the great battle"
(narrator: Dhṛtarāṣṭra — narratee: Saṃjaya)

Minor book 3 (*Pauṣya*)
"The story of Janamejaya's curse and conquest of Takṣasilā"
"The story of enmity of Uttaṅka and Takṣaka"

Minor books 4-5

narrator: Ugraśravas — narratee: Śaunaka

Minor book 4 (*Puloman*)
"The story of Bhṛgu"
"The story of Ruru"
> "The story of the lizard Ruru"
(narrator: the lizard Ruru — narratee: the man Ruru)

Minor book 5 (*Āstīka*)
1. "The story of Āstīka and the snake sacrifice" - promised but not started
+2[1]. "The story of Jaratkāru" - interrupted
+3. "The story of the curse of mother of snakes" - interrupted
+4. "The story of the churning of the ocean" - completed
+3. "The story of the curse of mother of snakes" - completed
+5. "The story of Garuḍa" - interrupted
> 6. "The story of the elephant and the tortoise" - completed
(narrator: Kaśyapa — narratee: Garuḍa)
+5. "The story of Garuḍa" - continued and interrupted
+7. "The story of the sage Kaśyapa - completed
+5. "The story of Garuḍa" - continued and completed
+8. "The story of the snake Vāsuki and his sister - interrupted
+2[2]. "The story of Jaratkāru" - promised but interrupted
+9(1). "The story of Parikṣit (1)" - completed
+2[2]. "The story of Jaratkāru" - repeated and completed
> 9(2). "The story of Parikṣit (2)" - completed
(narrator: councillors — narratee: Janamejaya)
1. "The story of Āstīka and the snake sacrifice" - started and completed

There are two embedded narratives in the minor book 3. First of them begins with the king Janamejaya (the narratee of the F(II)) and his brothers.[640] They are sacrificing and see a young dog come near. The brothers beat up the dog, thinking that he came to lick

[640] The names of the brothers, Śrutasena, Ugrasena and Bhīmasena, are mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 13.5.4.1. (van Buitenen 1973:2).

the offering.[641] The dog complains to his mother who happens to be a divine being, Indra's female dog Saramā.[642] She flings a curse upon Janamejaya. The king seeks for help in the forest and finds the seer Śrutaśravas, who has a son called Somaśravas. The king asks for the son to be his priest. The father says that the son was born from a snake-woman[643] and is able to take the curse upon himself and appease Saramā,[644] but only on the condition that he (Somaśravas) must give to the brahmans anything that they will demand of him. The king accepts the condition, goes home and decides to conquer Takṣaśilā.

The curse, the snake-born Somaśravas and his condition to give his possessions to brahmans are forgotten[645] and Ugraśravas tells another story that goes to totally different direction. However, after a while it introduces again the motif of snakes, and it ends in the court of Janamejaya. The story is full of interesting and partly obscure details. It begins with a guru who tortures his three students with ascetic trials that are described in detail.[646] Then the narrative leaves the guru and nothing is heard of him after this.[647] One of his students, Veda, grows up to have students of his own. Two kings, Janamejaya and Pauṣya, come to him and choose him as their preceptor. One day Veda must go away to serve these masters and he leaves the house in charge of one of his students, Uttaṅka. (At last, as Uttaṅka is the real protagonist of this narrative.)

Uttaṅka is urged by the women of the house to sleep with the guru's wife, but he stays firm, like the Biblical Joseph in Potiphar's house. Veda comes back and is pleased, and says that Uttaṅka has now completed his education. Uttaṅka still wants to serve his guru, so he sends him to his wife who tells that she wants the earrings of the wife of Pauṣya[648]. Uttaṅka goes for the earrings, has some bizarre adventures[649] and gets the trinkets. After a strange exchange of curses with Pauṣya Uttaṅka departs. On the way home the snake king[650] Takṣaka snatches the earrings and vanishes into earth. Uttaṅka

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[641] See the narrative of Dīrghajihvī (pp. 92-93).
[642] See p. 83.
[643] The motif of snakes dominates the embedded narratives of the F(I).
[644] The situation here seems to imitate the narrative of the Śunaḥśepa (see 2.3.2.), as Somaśravas is the middle son and given to the king just like Śunaḥśepa.
[645] Later in the text it becomes clear that the snake sacrifice takes place in Takṣaśilā. The name seems also to be connected with the snake king Takṣaka (see below).
[646] One of the three students is Uddālaka Āruṇi, who is an important teacher in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.
[647] But the house priest of Yudhiṣṭhira has the same name as he: see p. 227.
[648] This seems a rather audacious demand, but supposedly it reflects the basic superiority of the brahmans who gave their services of the kings. Another mystery is why this book does not bear Uttaṅka's name but Pauṣya's, who is not an important character in it.
[649] These include repeated visits to women's quarters and eating the dung and urine of a gigantic bull.
[650] Snakes like Takṣaka are *Nāgas*, not real snakes but antropomorphic snake-spirits that have a human head and a snakelike body. They live in underworld or in heaven and possess magical powers. Takṣaka

follows him to the underworld of snakes, which is full of fascinating things[651]. Uttaṅka tries to charm Takṣaka with flattering verses[652] but succeeds only after he has blown into the arse of an oversized horse; thus he produces smoke which scorches Takṣaka, who is then willing to return the earrings. Uttaṅka goes home and gives the earrings to the wife of his teacher, and Veda explains to him the strange things that he has experienced on his journey. But Uttaṅka is not happy. He is furious because of the delay caused by Takṣaka, and he hates snakes to the point that he wants to have them all killed. So he goes to the king Janamejaya and informs him that the king's father Parikṣit[653] was killed by Takṣaka.[654] Heureka! The last episode is connected to the beginning of the frame, because this is the motive for Janamejaya to prepare a snake sacrifice which will be the narrative situation of F(II). The king gets angry, turns to his ministers and asks how exactly his father was killed.

The question is left unanswered, however, because the book 3 ends there. The answer of the councillors comes later, near the end of the book 5. In the minor book 4, as said before, one experiences a *déja vu*: prose changes back into verse, and once again Ugraśravas comes to the Naimiṣa Forest where the priests are performing a *sattra*.[655] But now Śaunaka himself (the *kulapati*, see above) is fetched by the priests to ask questions.[656] Śaunaka says in a rather imperious tone[657] that he has heard everything before from the father of Ugraśravas. So, unlike his priests, he does not want to hear Vyāsa's tales but the story of his ancestors, the Bhṛgus.[658]

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has evil instincts but other Nāgas (Śeṣa, Vāsuki etc.) are benevolent and help gods (e g. in the churning of the ocean, see below).

[651] There are e.g. two women weaving a loom of black and white threads. This legend boes back to the *brāhmaṇas*: in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.42-44 Bhṛgu finds the weaving women in his journey to the Underworld.

[652] An interesting detail is that the verses mention Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata as the overlord of the snakes. This fact is told in the list of the snakes in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (25.6).

[653] Parikṣit is born near the end of the MBh after his father has been killed. He is the son of Abhimanyu who is the son of Arjuna, the third of the Pāṇḍava brothers.

[654] Many commentators have noted that it is strange that Janamejaya does not know how his father was killed. But there may be reasons: perhaps his councillors and priests did not want him to revenge his father by ordering a snake sacrifice.

[655] The "double introduction" is discussed in 3.2.1. below.

[656] Śaunaka is not only a narratee in F(I), he is also a character in the main narrative and knows all of the MBh beforehand.

[657] For the attitude of Śaunaka see 3.3.1. p. 242.

[658] The strong presence of Śaunaka (whose name is derived from the word *śvan*-, "dog") in this frame, the appearance of other Bhārgavas in the text and the stories about them have made some scholars (e.g. Sukthankar) think that the text of the MBh was in some point "taken over" by the Bhṛgu clan. See, however, Hiltebeitel 2001a: 105-118. Of the Bhṛgus in the MBh, see Goldman 1977.

Obediently, Ugraśravas tells a story about the originator of the clan. Bhṛgu's pregnant wife Pulomā is abducted by the demon Puloman.[659] The demon had once been betrothed to her, and after kidnapping her he asks the fire (Agni) to confirm this fact. Agni does this, but then baby Cyavana (the same person as in the chapter 2.3.2.) drops from the womb of the Bhṛgu's wife and beams so hotly that Puloman is burned to ashes. Bhṛgu comes and vents his anger at Agni who has taken sides with Puloman, and curses him "to devour everything". Agni gets also furious and withdraws from the sacrifices. The brahmans are at loss, and without sacrifices the cosmos goes out of joint. The god Brahmā rushes in to make peace between Agni and the mankind, giving a decree that Agni will devour all only in the sacrifice, and there he purifies all which is burned. (Here the style becomes rather technical and brāhmaṇic.)

Next, Ugraśravas tells the story of Śaunaka's great-grandfather Ruru, who is the son of Cyavana's son Pramati. With this tale the frame curves back towards snakes and Janamejaya. Ruru's bride is killed by a snake, but he gives half of his remaining life to his sweetheart to revive her. After that he hates all snakes and kills them until he meets a man, who by a curse was changed to a lizard, also Ruru by name.[660] The lizard Ruru (who tells his story in an embedded narrative) was destined to be freed from his reptile form when meeting the other Ruru. The former lizard says that not all snakes are bad: there are wicked snakes and good snakes. He preaches non-violence to Ruru and tells him about the snake sacrifice of the king Janamejaya (a hint towards the F(II)) and a certain Āstīka who stopped it. The snake sacrifice, it is to be noted, is not an event of past or even present but will take place in future, three generations later. Anyway, Ruru goes to his father and wants to hear the story of Āstīka, and the father promises to tell it.

It is narrated next, in the book 5 ("the book of Āstīka"), but not by Ruru's father. Ugraśravas will tell it (1). Or rather, he chooses to tell a back-story, *the story of Jaratkāru* (2^1). Jaratkāru lives a life of an unmarried ascetic, until he happens to meet his ancestors, who are hanging in a cave heads down like bats on a blade of grass that a rat is gnawing. They do not want their line to go extinct and urge Jaratkāru to get a wife and have a son. Jaratkāru agrees, but sets almost impossible restrictions: his wife must have the same name as he, she must be offered to him as alms, and he should not support him. As if by a miracle, such wife is found and offered to him. She is the sister of the snake Vāsuki.

[659] This is the first set of namesakes in this frame.
[660] Another pair of namesakes. A third comes soon: Jaratkāru wants a wife with the same name. The tale of the lizard Ruru resembles the story of Nahuṣa (see p. 222 n. 774).

Ugraśravas reveals that the reason for Vāsuki's offer is the curse of the mother of snakes: her whole offspring shall in the future be killed in the snake sacrifice of king Janamejaya (again a glance towards the F(II)), but Āstīka, the son of the two Jaratkārus, will free the snakes from the curse.

Śaunaka demands the *full* tale of Āstīka, "as your father used to tell it", and so Ugraśravas tells another back-story, *the story of the curse of the mother of snakes* (3). The sage Kaśyapa has two wifes, the sisters Kadrū and Vinatā. Kadrū gives birth to a thousand snakes. Vinatā lays two eggs, the first of which she cracks open too soon. The first bird-son Aruṇa is born deformed, and he curses her mother for her haste to be her sister's slave.[661] Then the sisters see the mythical horse Uccaiḥśravas ("he of a mighty voice") in the horizon. The horse was born in the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons, and after being asked a question about this Ugraśravas drops (3) to tell *the story of the churning of the ocean and the nectar of immortality* (4).

The gods wish that they had *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality, and Viṣṇu tells that it comes up when the ocean is churned by the gods and the *asuras*[662]. The gods ask the snake Ananta to uproot the mount Meru to be used the churning pole. The they take the king of the tortoises as the platform and the snake Vāsuki as the churning rope and churn the ocean.[663] All kinds of wonderful things arise from it, among them the horse Uccaiḥṣravas. Last comes out the *amṛta*. Asuras grab it but Viṣṇu changes himself into a beautiful woman and gets it back. The gods and asuras fight, the gods win and return to their celestial abode with the *amṛta*.

After this story is completed, the story (3) continues. The sisters wager on the colour of the horse. Vinatā guesses that it is white, and she is right. Kadrū, a bad loser, asks her snake-children to attach themselves to the horse's tail to make the horse partly black. They decline. Kadrū is not pleased and curses them: they shall all perish in the snake sacrifice. Brahmā cannot cancel the curse, but he gives Kaśyapa the power to heal snakebites. Obviously the snakes obey after having been cursed[664], because Vinatā loses the wager and becomes her sister's slave.

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[661] This curse takes some time to take force. Vinatā becomes her sister's slave only after he loses the wager about Uccaiḥśravas.

[662] *Asuras* were originally another "race" of gods. Varuṇa is called many times an asura, and in the Iranian religion asuras were good spirits. In India they became later opponents of the gods, like the titans in the Greek mythology, and asura started to signify a demonic creature.

[663] Many commentators have noted that here the snakes help the gods to attain the *amṛta*. So it is natural that Indra protects Takṣaka.

[664] In the Vulgata it is said that they first decline and then yield, but are cursed anyway.

But then her other son is hatched: he is the gigantic bird Garuḍa. Garuḍa finds out that he has to carry the snakes around and serve them. He asks his mother why he must do this, and she tells about the wager. Then Garuḍa asks the snakes how he could free himself and her mother from slavery. (Here the storyline moves away from the "curse story" (3) and we are inside "the story of Garuḍa" (5)). The snakes say that they will let him and her mother be free, if they get the nectar of immortality in return. This nectar, as was told before in (4), is in heaven where Indra guards it.[665]

Garuḍa's father Kaśyapa advises him to feed on his way to heaven first with a race of lowly caste of Niṣādas, and then, with *a giant tortoise and an elephant* who are each other's enemies. They were once brothers who quarreled over a woman, and Kaśyapa tells *their story* in an embedded narrative (6), after which (5) continues. Garuḍa grabs the elephant and the tortoise, but as he sits on a branch to eat them, the branch breaks and falls down. It nearly kills the Vālakhilyas, a clan of tiny brahmans who, like Jaratkāru's ancestors, are hanging on a branch heads down like bats. Garuḍa saves the little brahmans, eats the elephant and the tortoise and flies up towards the heaven. The gods are worried by portents of disaster and start fighting with each other. Indra asks Bṛhaspati (Brahmā) what is wrong, and the creator god tells the heaven is threatened by Garuḍa who has come to steal the *amṛta*, and it is Indra's fault: because of him Garuḍa was engendered by the Vālakhilyas.

Śaunaka asks for an explanation, and Ugraśravas tells *the story of sage Kaśyapa* (7), which chronologically precedes the story (3). Kaśyapa wishes for a son and offers a sacrifice to this end. He orders Indra and the Vālakhilyas to bring firewood to the sacrifice. The gigantic Indra mocks the tiny brahmins. They feel insulted and curse him, saying that Kaśyapa's son will become a second Indra and will attack him in the future.[666]

After this story Ugraśravas returns to (5). As foretold, Garuḍa attacks heaven, grabs the nectar of immortality and defeats Indra. Indra is humbled, expresses a wish to be Garuḍa's friend and offers him a boon. Garuḍa wishes that his enemies, the snakes, would be his staple diet. In return, he promises that Indra will get the nectar back. He flies to earth with the nectar and fools the snakes to bathe before drinking the nectar. While they do this, Indra steals the nectar and carries it off. The snakes lick the *kuśa* grass[667] on which the nectar has been set and get forked tongues.

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[665] See the chapter 2.3.1.
[666] In this way they "engender" Garuḍa.
[667] This contact with *amṛta* explains why *kuśa* grass is sacred and used in rituals.

Śaunaka wants to hear the names of some of the snakes, and then asks what they did after the curse. Ugraśravas tells *the story of snake Vāsuki and his sister* (8) that precedes chronologically the union of the Jaratkārus (the story 2). The snakes take to various measures to protect themselves from the curse of their mother. Śeṣa turns into an ascetic. Brahmā is pleased, chooses him to support the earth and gives him a new name, Ananta.[668] Vāsuki calls his siblings to a council to think a way out of the horrible sacrifice. They offer devious solutions which Vāsuki rejects. Then Elāpatra remembers what Brahmā has foretold. Evil snakes will die in fire, but good snakes will survive, and a man called Āstīka will stop the snake sacrifice. This Āstīka will be born if his father-to-be Jaratkāru finds a wife. Vāsuki goes to Brahmā and hears from him that the wife should be his sister. But the man Jaratkāru does not want to marry anybody.

Śaunaka asks what is the etymology of the name Jaratkāru, and Ugraśravas provides it ad hoc. Perhaps he is distracted by the question, because he does not continue with Jaratkāru, but tells *the story of Parikṣit* (9(1)). He is Janamejaya's father, and his death by Takṣaka was mentioned already in the minor book 3. Now comes the full story. Parikṣit is hunting a deer in a forest. There he meets a brahman ascetic who has taken a vow of silence and does not talk to him. Parikṣit gets angry and insults him by hanging a dead snake to his neck. The brahman's son comes and sees this, gets also angry and curses Parikṣit to be killed by the snake Takṣaka within seven days. The father is more lenient and defends Parikṣit. The curse cannot be taken back, however, so the father sends a message to warn the king. Parikṣit stays on house built on a high pillar and surrounds himself with herbs and physicians to avoid his fate. The sage Kāśyapa[669] who can heal a snakebite sets out to help Parikṣit. Takṣaka meets him on the way, offers him gold and asks him to turn around. He has foreseen that the king will die anyway, so he turns back. Then the cunning Takṣaka sends fruit to the king. Parikṣit sees a worm in an apple, gives it the name Takṣaka and puts it to his neck, thinking that the worm's tiny bite would "fulfill" the curse. But the worm is transformed to Takṣaka, who grows huge and fiery, and the king is killed. His son Jananamejaya is crowned to be the new king.

After this narrative is finished, Ugraśravas switches back to *the story of Jaratkāru* (2^2). He repeats it from the beginning, adding details and flourishes. Again Jaratkāru wanders and meets his ancestors, who demand that the ascetic should marry to

[668] Here is an inversion in narrative time. If Śeṣa is only now elevated to become Ananta, how is it possible that before the snakes were cursed, Ananta helped the gods in the churning of the ocean?
[669] Probably a relative of that Kaśyapa who had fathered the race of snakes and could also heal snakebites.

save them. Jaratkāru gives his conditions. Snakes hear of him and Vāsuki offers her sister to be his wife. The two Jaratkārus marry, but he warns her not to displease him in any way. After a while she wakes him from his sleep to do the evening ceremony, and he loses his temper and wants to leave. The wife begs him to stay, because they do not yet have a son. The man touches her belly and says *asti* ("([he] is there"). It appears that the wife is already pregnant. From his father's words the son gets the name Āstīka.

Āstīka is left to grow up, as Śaunaka wants to know how the ministers answered when Janamejaya asked them about his father. This situation occurred at the end of book 3, where the seers were the audience of Ugraśravas but Śaunaka was nowhere round. In addition, Śaunaka has already heard the story of Parikṣit. No matter, Ugraśravas goes back to *the story of Parikṣit* (9), but does not repeat it himself. He lets the ministers narrate their version (9(2)). It is different from the one told by Ugraśravas (9(1)). It presents Parikṣit in a favourable light, and his enemies are painted black. The brahman father, his son and the sage Kāśyapa are all to blame for the king's death. After hearing a witness who tells how the wicked Takṣaka bribed the sage the king makes up his mind, and Ugraśravas can finally get to *the story of Āstīka and the snake sacrifice* (1).

Because of Takṣaka's crime (and Kadrū's curse and Uttaṅka's vengeful anger) Janamejaya wants all snakes in the world to be killed in a sacrifice. It will not be an ordinary *sattra* but a rite of black magic. The priests wear black clothes. The head priest is called Caṇḍabhārgava ("A horrible Bhārgava").[670] The ritual is not directed to the gods: it is simply a revenge. The snakes will be burned alive, just like Janamejaya's father was burned alive by the poison of Takṣaka.

But the narrator hints that the revenge will not succeed. While preparing the sacrificial ground, the master builder who was also a *sūta* foresaw that the sacrifice will be interrupted by a brahman. Because of this the king has commanded that no stranger is allowed to approach the sacrificial area. So the sacrifice begins. When snakes are hurled into the fire in thousands, Vāsuki senses in heaven what is happening on earth and gets feverish and sick. He tells his sister that it is time for Āstīka to save the snakes. The snake-woman Jaratkāru relates to his son the story of the Kadrū's curse and how Āstīka was born to save his mother's kin. Āstīka hastens to stop the sacrifice, but he cannot go near because of the king's orders. He sings a beautiful hymn which praises the sacrifice, the priests and the king. The king is pleased, and against the advice of his sacrificial retinue

[670] Again a reference to the Bhṛgus as a violent element in the MBh. According to Hiltebeitel they represent the forces of old non-dharmic world that also are the cause of the Bhārata war.

(*sadasyas*) he gives Āstīka a boon. The *sadasyas* demand that the king should wait until Takṣaka has met his doom. Indra, who has protected snake king, is forced to bring him down from heaven, and Takṣaka is thrown into the fire. Just then Āstīka asks for the interruption of the sacrifice. The king declines, saying that Āstīka must choose another boon.

In the frame Śaunaka interrupts the narrator and asks to hear the names of the snakes that have already been burned. Only after a list of eighty-eight famous snakes who have perished Ugraśravas can tell that the *sadasyas* now say that the king must keep his promise, and the sacrifice is interrupted just before Takṣaka touches the fire.[671]

The bard finishes the book by praising Āstīka and telling that "he went in due time to his fate, leaving sons and grandsons behind."[672] But how is this possible? The Bard has heard the MBh in the same snake sacrifice that was interrupted by Āstīka, who is described as "a child": surely he had not yet sired any sons. Āstīka is a seer, and seers like Vyāsa, Nārada and the lot have an exceptionally long life-span. Bards, however, are kṣatriyas and ordinary people with ordinary lives. The pilgrimage of the Bard and his travel to the Naimiṣa Forest must have taken a very long time if he now can tell about Āstīka's death as a thing long past. Maybe he only foresees it? One also may question whether Āstīka and his story (or all the back-stories of the F(I) that lead towards it) are inside the MBh at all, if the narrative of Vaiśaṃpāyana had come to an end before the interruption of the sacrifice. These anomalies will be discussed in 3.3.3.

3.1.2. The frame of Vaiśampāyana (F(II))

In the minor book 6, "The Descent of the First Generations", the back-stories finally get nearer to the protagonists of the main narrative. There is also a change of the narrator and the frame. In the beginning of this book we are still in the frame of Ugraśravas and in the Naimiṣa Forest. Śaunaka confirms that the Bard has told him "the entire great story, from

[671] It is also told that Takṣaka is held suspended in the air by Āstīka's ascetic power all the time so that the king, his ministers and Āstīka have time to negotiate (and Ugraśravas has time to give the list of snakes in F(I)). See 3.3.3.
[672] Translation by van Buitenen.

the generation of Bhṛgu forward"[673], and he is ready to hear the stories composed by Vyāsa. Ugraśravas specifies first the situation in the snake sacrifice: the priests told Vedic stories (from the *Brāhmaṇas*?) but Vyāsa narrated the MBh[674], and he has listened to it. Now he promises to tell it "from the very beginning".

Ugraśravas starts by telling again about Vyāsa, alias Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana. But now he does not begin from his great work, but from his birth.[675] His father was Parāśara, son of Śakti[676], and his mother was Kālī, or Satyavatī, who remained virgin after giving him birth. By the power of his own will Vyāsa grew in an instant to manhood, mastered Veda, divided it into four parts, practiced austerities and later became the father Dhṛtarāṣtra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura and the grandfather of the five Pāṇḍava brothers (the protagonists of the main narrative).

After this short but impressive biography Ugraśravas tells (again) how Vyāsa and his five students arrived the sacrifice of the king Janamejaya. The king received the sage respectfully, paid him homage and gave him a golden stool to sit on. After this the king asks Vyāsa to tell about the deeds of his ancestors, the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas, and the great war. Vyāsa turns to his student Vaiśaṃpāyana and asks him to narrate all in full, as he has heard it from his teacher. Ugraśravas tells that Vaiśaṃpāyana narrated "the entire Epic [...] the breach of the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas, which spelled the destruction of the kingdom." The voice of Ugraśravas fades away and the narration shifts to the level of the second frame and second narrator.[677]

The contents of F(I) have been described in detail, because this "outermost" frame is so interesting and revealing from the point of view of framing. As already seen, it provides a preface and a table of contents to the text. But not only that. As will be seen in the chapter 3.2.1., it introduces the themes, structural devices and the mode of narrating of the MBh. All that follows complies with this plan. But first let us look at the F(II).

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[673] This is also a bit ambiguous: what is "the entire great story"? Certainly not the MBh, which should be the same as "Vyāsa's stories" that will come next.

[674] This is indeed stated by Ugraśravas in 1.53.31 and also confirmed by Śaunaka in 1.53.32., even though it is said everywhere else that Vaiśaṃpāyana recites the MBh at Janamejaya's sacrifice, not Vyāsa. See chapter 3.3.3. below.

[675] Here is again a repetitive narrative that begins from further back than the first one.

[676] Parāśara is a seer, and his grandfather (the father of Śakti) is Vasiṣṭha. Satyavatī is the daughter of the fisher king and acts as a ferry-girl. She smells of fish, and the seer promises to take away the fishy odour and restore her virginity if she will sleep with him.

[677] The F(I) reappears in some places: 2.46.4. (this intervention of one clause is discussed at length (and in my opinion, overinterpreted) by Hiltebeitel (2015: 46-61); 12.331, 334-335 (these appear only in some mss. and Vulgata); 15.43 (when Ugraśravas tells how Vyāsa allows the king Janamejaya to meet his dead father, see p. 199 below); and 18.5 (the end of the Epic).

The F(II) envelopes the rest of the MBh. The secondary narrator on this secondary level is Vaiśampāyana, the narratee/audience is the king Janamejaya and his sacrificial retinue (*sadasyas*),[678] and the setting is the snake sacrifice that the king has ordered. Unlike F(I), this is a sustained frame, but nevertheless full of embedded narratives with their own narrators. Especially "The Book of Forest" (*Āraṇyakaparvan*, the major book 3) has many embedded narrators and narratives, and I will present a more detailed analysis of its narrators and narrative levels in 3.2.4. Within the second frame embeddings can be very long, like those covering the books 6-9 (the frame of Saṃjaya: "The War") and 12-13 (the frame of Bhīṣma, "The Dharma"): these two are discussed in 3.2.2. and 3.2.3. Nevertheless the narrative returns always to the frame of Vaiśaṃpāyana with a clause that is outside the verse (extra metrum): *vaiśaṃpāyana uvāca*, "Vaiśampāyana said". Also the speeches of the narrators of the embedded frames and the dialogue of the characters in the narratives are preceded with this extra metrum formula (x *uvāca*, "x said").

Narratees are addressed with conventional vocatives that refer to their kingly position or their clan ("O bull of Bhāratas", "O son of Pāṇḍu", "O great king" etc). Unfortunately they are similar for many of the narratees, as they all are Bhāratas and kings, except seers like Śaunaka. Bhīṣma, the leading guru of the MBh, is adressed with the honorary epithet *Pitāmaha*, "Grandfather" or "Grandsire". F(II) reappears with full apparatus of audience and narrative situation on their place at the end of the MBh and brings the text into full closure. F(I), however, contains in the end only the voice of the Bard: there is no dialogue with Śaunaka or any other narratee, so the narrative situation is not re-established.

As the F(II) embraces nearly all of the text of the MBh, I do not describe it in such detail as the F(I). The whole MBh can divided into three larger sections: the major books 1-5 deal with the history before the Bhārata war, the books 6-10 describe the war itself and the books 11-18 are concerned with its consequences up to the death of its last survivor Yudhiṣṭhira. As in the narrative of Ugraśravas, in F(II) there is first a simplified summary and then the full story, which begins with a string of back-stories.[679] The summary of Vaiśampāyana covers the events to the end of the war, and after Janamejaya has asked to hear about all this in more detail, begins by telling stories about ancestors of the protagonists, Pūru and Vasu, Śakuntalā and Yayāti, and the gods and demons that

[678] "The Author" Vyāsa and his son and disciples are also present.
[679] See chapter 3.2.1.below.

have been incarnated as the characters of the story. Then he tells about the birth of Bhīṣma from the union of the king Śaṃtanu and the goddess Gaṅgā, and about the marriage of Śaṃtanu with Satyavatī who had earlier given birth to Vyāsa. When the son of Śaṃtanu and Satyavatī dies childless, his half-brother Vyāsa is summoned to sire sons with his wives, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu are born.[680]

The rest of "The Book of the Beginnings" tells almost everything about the background of the war. Because Dhṛtarāṣṭra is blind[681], Pāṇḍu becomes the king and marries Kuntī and Mādrī. Dhṛtarāṣṭra marries Gāndhārī, who out of loyalty decides to live her life blindfolded. Vyāsa gives a boon to her, and she wishes for a hundred sons. After two years she gives birth to a huge lump of flesh. By Vyāsa's magic the lump is divided into a hundred embryos which grow in pots and after another two years produce a hundred sons. Their birth is accompanied with bad omens which show that they are incarnations of demons. They are the Kauravas, the eldest of which is Duryodhana. He is to become the main enemy of his cousins.

Before this Kuntī has given birth to Yudhiṣṭhira. His father is not Pāṇḍu who cannot sleep with his wife because of a curse.[682] Kuntī has a charm by which she can invite any god to her bedchamber: before her marriage she has secretly had a son, Karṇa, by the sun god Sūrya, and put him in the river, like the baby Moses. The gods Dharma, Vāyu (Wind) and Indra become thus the fathers of Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma and Arjuna. Pāṇḍu's younger wife Mādrī invites with the same charm the Aśvins to her bed and gives birth to the twins Nakula and Sahadeva.[683] The two pairs of cousins grow up together and study martial arts under Bhīṣma and Droṇa, and their competition grows into enmity.

After Pāṇḍu and Mādrī have died, Duryodhana arranges his cousins and their mother Kuntī to go into another country and live there in a lacquer house, which is then set on fire. The Pāṇḍavas manage to escape, have some adventures in the forest, have

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[680] A third son Vidura is born from the union of Vyāsa with a servant girl. Vidura is normal and wise but he cannot be a king because of his lowly birth. He acts as a counsellor and the voice of reason in the court of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

[681] The blindness of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the paleness of Pāṇḍu (whose name means "the pale one") are explained in the text as being caused by the reactions of the widows to the approach of the surrogate father Vyāsa. Meeting the old and terrifying ascetic the older wife closes her eyes and the younger one gets pale. See 3.3.2.

[682] This is one of the many curses that drive the plot (and also the sub-plots) of the MBh. Pāṇḍu has shot a deer when it is copulating: the deer happens to be a seer that has only taken the shape of a deer, and when he dies he curses Pāṇḍu also to die in the instant he copulates. Pāṇḍu stays celibate for a long time but in the end he indeed dies when going to bed with his younger wife Mādrī. After his husband's death Mādrī joins him on funeral pyre: this is the first time that a performance of a *satī* is attested.

[683] As the Pāṇḍavas are sons of gods and the Kauravas incarnated demons, they are predestined to repeat the battle of the gods and demons which is one of the most prominent myths of the Vedic literature.

stories narrated to them[684] and, disguised as brahmans, go to the *svayaṃvara* (marriage contest) of the beautiful daughter of king Drupada, called Kṛṣṇā or Draupadī.[685] The competitors of her hand must string a huge bow and hit a difficult target, and Arjuna is the only one to succeed. The other suitors, Karṇa (who had become an ally of the Kauravas) and Śalya among them, resent the triumph of "a brahman" and attack the brothers, but are slain back. Draupadī becomes the wife of all five Pāṇḍavas.[686] In the *svayaṃvara* the Pāṇḍavas also make friends with lord Kṛṣṇa, the ruler of the Vṛṣṇis, and his brother Balarāma.

There is a temporary reconciliation between the cousins, as Dhṛtarāṣṭra, advised by his uncle Bhīṣma, his step-brother Vidura and general Droṇa, invites the Pāṇḍavas back.[687] The kingdom is divided into two halves between Duryodhana and Yudhiṣṭhira. Arjuna weds Kṛṣṇa's sister Subhadrā, who gives birth to Abhimanyu, who will be later the father of Parikṣit. Draupadī has five sons by each of her husbands. Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa burn the Khāṇḍava Forest where Takṣaka lives, but the Nāga king happens to be elsewhere.[688]

The second major book (*Sabhāparvan*, "The Book of the Assembly Hall") tells how Yudhiṣṭhira loses his kingdom. He builds a palace in his new capital Indraprastha and arranges a grandiose coronation ceremony (*rājasūya*).[689] It has been noticed that the plot of the second book makes reference to this kingly ritual[690] which, in turn, had copied it in Vedic times from the competitive feats of the warriors. In the *rājasūya* there should be, in addition to *soma* pressing and ointing of the king, a contest of archery (in the MBh this happens in the *svayaṃvara* of Draupadī), a mock cattle raid, a chariot race and a game

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[684] E.g. the gandharva king Citraratha tells them the stories of Tapatī, Vasiṣṭha and Aurva. Citraratha appears again in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* (Book 3).

[685] It has been predicted at her birth that she shall bring the present world to an end. Same thing is predicted by beautiful women in narratives of other cultures too (e.g. the Icelandic sagas and the old Irish myths). The MBh is full of predictions, bad omens and curses that point towards disaster.

[686] In the narrative the reason for this is that Kuntī orders Arjuna to share his prize with his brothers, without knowing what it is. After Draupadī has wed the five brothers, Vyāsa tells the story of the four Indras to give justification to the polyandry. - Polygamy has been the usual custom among higher classes in India. Polyandry has been practiced only by some tribal societies of the Himalayas, the husbands being brothers, as in the marriage of Draupadī.

[687] Dhṛtarāṣṭra is constantly given wise and cautious advice by his counsellors, but he ignores it to appease his eldest son Duryodhana. If the father wavers, the son threatens with suicide. The weakness of Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the main reason for the many disasters in the plot of the MBh. He puts the love for his son above his duty as a king. A similar choice is presented to the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and he puts duty above all. The result is a personal tragedy but, we might suppose, a moral triumph.

[688] This conflagration anticipates the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya.

[689] The *rājasūya* (described in detail in Heesterman (1957)) is reserved to an emperor, not to a minor king like Yudhiṣṭhira, so it is not very logical that he wishes to perform it, and it would be understandable that this also might irritate the Kauravas.

[690] van Buitenen 1975: 5-6.

of dice in which the king is supposed to win. In the MBh this ceremony is not described in any detail. The dice game takes place only after the ritual, and with a twist, as the king loses.

When Duryodhana arrives to the *rājasūya*, he sees Yudhiṣṭhira's magnificent palace, and when he slips accidentally into a pond, he is ridiculed by his hosts and their servants. Full of envy and anger he hatches a plan to get hold of his cousin's fortune. Yudhiṣṭhira is invited to the assembly hall of the Kauravas to play dices with Śakuni, a maternal uncle of the Kauravas and a skilled gambler. By deceit Yudhiṣṭhira is made to lose two times in a row his kingdom and the freedom of himself, his brothers and his wife. Dhṛtarāṣṭra intervenes and cancels the games, but still the Pāṇḍavas must agree to spend twelve years in exile and one year unrecognized in disguise. In this book the plot proceeds clear and straight without digressions or embedded subtales, so it is not discussed in further detail here.

The third book (*Āraṇyakaparvan*, "The Book of the Forest") tells about the twelve years' exile in the forest. It has numerous embedded narratives and is treated separately in the chapter 3.2.3. In the fourth book (*Virātaparvan*, "The Book of Virāṭa") the Pāṇḍavas spend the thirteenth year incognito in the court of Virāṭa, the king of Matsya. Their disguises are a source of humour[691], but there is also danger, when the minister Kīcaka tries to rape Draupadī, who poses as a servant girl, and when Duryodhana attacks the Matsya kingdom. "The Book of the Effort" (*Udyogaparvan*) tells about the negotiations before the war, as Duryodhana will not give the Pāṇḍavas their kingdom back. The book ends with "the story of Ambā", which Bhīṣma narrates.[692]

In "The Book of Bhīṣma" (no. 6, *Bhīṣmaparvan*) the war begins. "The Author" Vyāsa makes one of his many appearances and gives the charioteer Saṃjaya a divine eye (*divyacakṣus*) so that the *sūta* can see everything that happens in the battle and narrate it to the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra. In this way Saṃjaya becomes the narrator of the next books, a sort of war correspondent, and tells the king first all about the cosmos and the geopraphy of Bhāratavarṣa (India) and then about fighting in the battlefield. This embedding is

[691] This book and the exploits of the strong man Bhīma bring comic relief to the basically tragic tone of the Epic.

[692] Bhīṣma must here explain why he does not want to attack Draupadī's brother Śikhandin. Long ago a princess called Ambā was abducted by Bhīṣma together with her sisters Ambikā and Ambālikā to be the wives of Bhīṣma's half-brothers. Ambā had been already betrothed to the king Śālva, so Bhīṣma sent her back. However, her honour had already been compromized and Śālva did not want to marry her. She swore vengeange to Bhīṣma but could not get him killed. Finally she burned herself with a wish that she would be reborn as a man to be able to kill Bhīṣma in a battle. She was reborn as Śikhandin.

discussed in 3.2.2. As the war is raging, Arjuna loses heart and does not want to kill his kinsmen. Kṛṣṇa gives a sermon to make him change his mind and reveals himself to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu: this is the *Bhagavadgītā*. The battle is terrible and the Pāṇḍavas suffer heavy losses. Then Bhīṣma, the general of Kauravas, receives deadly wounds. However, his father had given him a boon in return of his decision of withdraw from kingship and remain celibate, and he had chosen the power to decide the moment of his death. So he chooses to live on for the time being. In "The Book of Droṇa" (no. 7, *Droṇaparvan*) Saṃjaya continues to tell what he sees with his all-seeing eye. Droṇa is now the general of the Kauravas. Arjuna's son Abhimanyu and Bhīma's son Ghaṭotkaca are killed, and after that Droṇa is killed by an ugly ruse of the Pāṇḍavas.[693]

Karṇa replaces Droṇa in "The Book of Karṇa" (no. 8, *Karṇaparvan*), and is killed by Arjuna. "The Book of Śalya" (no. 9, *Śalyaparvan*) is number nine and now it is the turn of general Śalya to die. After this Duryodhana hides himself into the lake Dvaipāyana.[694] Then, during Saṃjaya's narration, the outer frame reappears and Vaiśaṃpāyana tells the back-story of Kṛṣṇa's brother Balarāma, who has come to the battle after being away for over a month ("The pilgrimage of Balarāma"). As the action returns to the present and to the war, Saṃjaya resumes the role of the narrator. Duryodhana rises from the lake and he and Bhīma fight with clubs. As he has predicted, Bhīma breaks Duroydhana's thigh and tramples on his fallen enemy. Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman swears revenge.

Saṃjaya is still the narrator when *Sauptikaparvan* (no. 10, "The book of the Sleeping Warriors") begins. Aśvatthāman prays to god Śiva who enters his body. This way he can launch all by himself a fatal nightly attack on the camp of the Pāṇḍavas. With his superhuman power he kills nearly everyone. Then he returns to Duryodhana, who dies happy after hearing the news. Then Saṃjaya loses his divine eye, the frame of "the War" is closed and Vaiśaṃpāyana (F(II) continues the tale. After consulting Vyāsa Aśvatthāman releases an ultimate weapon, "the arrow of Brahmā", on the wombs of the enemy women to kill their embryos and make them barren. Kṛṣṇa curses him and predicts that Abhimanyu's son will be saved anyway. Thus the devastation of the war is complete.

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[693] During the war the Pāṇḍavas make themselves guilty of many kinds of *adharma* (dishonourable conduct), often by the instigation of Kṛṣṇa. This *adharma* of the "good guys" is brought up frequently in the narration. The only explanation given seems to be the need to suppress Duryodhana who will not cease to wreak havoc in the world until he and his forces are destroyed. In this respect the plot bring into mind the ruses with which the god Viṣṇu in his various incarnations gets rid of the demons that plague the universe.

[694] Does this hint to an interference by Vyāsa (aka Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana)?

In "The Book of Women" (no. 11, *Strīparvan*) the queen Gāndhārī and other women mourn the dead, and offerings are made for them. In this occasion Gāndhārī curses Kṛṣṇa for being responsible for much of the suffering.[695]

In "The Book of Peace" (no. 12, *Śāntiparvan*) Yudhiṣṭhira, the victorious king, is sunk in depression. After having heard the story of Karṇa from the sage Nārada he is grieved to know that the enemy warrior had been his older brother. Being full of doubts, he wants to depart to the forest to live as an ascetic. His relatives and friends try to comfort him, encourage him and give him advice. Finally Vyāsa suggests that he should travel to see "grandfather" Bhīṣma who is still alive, lying on a bed of arrows in Kurukṣetra. They go to the Hāstinapura, where Yudhiṣṭhira is received as a king. This makes him feel more assured. Next they go to visit the old man.

Kṛṣṇa soothes Bhīṣma's pains, so that he can converse with Yudhiṣṭhira about the *dharma* of the kings. The rest of this huge book and almost all of the next "The Book of Instruction" (no. 13, *Anuśāsanaparvan*) is covered by the dialogue between Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma: they discuss all variations of kingly *dharma* and also the essence of existence and final release. Many embedded narratives illustrate the teaching, and F(II) and its narrator Vaiśaṃpāyana are pushed into background. The books 12 and 13 are discussed in 3.2.3. below. After having passed his wisdom on to Yudhiṣṭhira Bhīṣma is ready to depart to heaven.

In "The Book of Horse Sacrifice" (*Aśvamedhaparvan*), Vaiśaṃpāyana is again the main narrator. Vyāsa teaches Yudhiṣṭhira, and Kṛṣṇa discusses with Arjuna about *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* (the *Anugītā*)[696]. Then Kṛṣṇa returns to his kingdom Dvāraka. There he meets the mighty sage Uttaṅka, and the story of the earrings and the drinking of the urine that was told in the F(I) is repeated in another form.[697] Then Kṛṣṇa returns to the Pāṇḍavas, just in time to revive Parikṣit, the stillborn son of Abhimanyu. The rest of the book tells of the horse sacrifice that Yudhiṣṭhira prepares in his capital Indraprastha.[698]

The last books are much shorter than the others. "The book of the Hermitage" (no. 15, *Āśramavāsikaparvan*) tells of the fifteen years of peaceful life of the survivors.

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[695] The curse is fulfilled after a long time when a hunter called Jarā (possibly alluding to *jarā*, "old age") shoots him mistakenly and the arrow hits the sole of the foot which is the only place in the body of Kṛṣṇa that is not impenetrable. But Kṛṣṇa dies willingly, accepting his fate, and also that of his kinsmen and relatives.

[696] The relationship of the Anugītā and the *Bhagavadgītā*: see e.g. Sharma 1986: 1-12.

[697] See pp. 167-168.

[698] There are several substories in this book. The most notable of them is "The narrative of the mongoose" (14.92-93) which propagates non-violence and criticizes animal sacrifices. – Of the version of the MBh made by Vyāsa's disciple Jaimini only this chapter has survived; see the chapter 3.3.3.

After that the old generation, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī want to retire to the forest, and Vidura and Saṃjaya follow them. On a visit there Vyāsa is able to show them a vision of their beloved dead by the bank of the river Gaṅgā. Janamejaya who listens the story wishes also to see his father Parikṣit again. At this point the first frame (F(I)) appears after a long silence, and Ugraśravas tells how Vyāsa brought by his magic powers Parikṣit, young and forceful, before his son. Āstīka is also present in this occasion. He tells that the king has now heard all the sin-destroying narrative[699] and reduced the snakes into ash, but now the sacrifice is over and Takṣaka has been saved. Then the narrative goes back to the second frame and Vaiśaṃpāyana tells how Yudhiṣṭhira and others bid farewell to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī. Two years later the sage Nārada comes to tell Yudhiṣṭhira that the forest-dwellers have perished in a fire.

In "The Book of Clubs" (no 16, *Mausalaparvan*) the Pāṇḍavas hear that the Vṛṣṇis (Kṛṣṇa's clan) have killed each other in a drunken fight.[700] Kṛṣṇa and his brother have also died. Arjuna succeeds in giving shelter only for a few refugees. He is in despair, and Vyāsa, who appears for the last time in the MBh as a character, tries in vain to explain the meaning of the disaster. In "The Book of the Great Journey" (no. 17, *Mahāprasthānikaparvan*) Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers, old, sad and tired, leave their kingdom with Draupadī, and Parikṣit is consecrated to be the next king. The Pāṇḍavas begin a journey in the wilderness. The others fall down and die in the way, only Yudhiṣṭhira goes on with a dog which has followed them. At the gate of heaven Indra will not let him in if he does not leave the dog behind. When Yudhiṣṭhira refuses, the dog transforms into his father Dharma.

"The Book of the Ascent to Heaven" (no. 18, *Svargārohanaparvan*) presents the last trial for the old king. It seems to him that Duryodhana sits in glory on the highest seat of heaven, and his own family and friends are in hell, suffering from distress and torture. Yudhiṣṭhira proclaims that he will not go to heaven but stay in hell with his loved ones. Then the illusion vanishes, the gods arrive and Indra explains that good people see hell before they go to heaven, and the bad ones see heaven before going to hell. Yudhiṣṭhira

[699] Again here a question arises: at this point the king cannot have heard "the whole narrative", as there are three books still to go.

[700] This senseless carnage is caused by a curse that acts indirectly. Gāndhārī has cursed Kṛṣṇa and his kinsmen. Then the Vṛṣṇis make the mistake of teasing the seers Viśvāmitra, Kaṇva and Nārada who visit them. They dress up Kṛṣṇa's son as a pregnant woman, presenting him to the visitors and asking them to foretell what the boy will give birth to. The angry seers predict that the young man will give birth to a club which will kill the Vṛṣṇis and their allies Andhakas. The deaths of Kṛṣṇa and his brother are more straightforward. The killing of Kṛṣṇa by a hunter's arrow that hits his only vulnerable spot resembles the deaths of Achilles and Siegfried.

is now free to meet his relatives and friends in their divine forms.[701] But Janamejaya has a last question to ask: how long will his ancestors stay in their blissful state? After Vaiśaṃpāyana has given a consoling answer, Ugraśravas takes the position of the narrator and concludes the long story, repeating[702] how it was told in the snake sacrifice, how it was composed and what benefit will come of listening to it.

3.2. The levels of narration in the Mahābhārata

I hope that in the preceding two chapters I have not only described the contents of the MBh but offered a preliminary analysis of the greater and smaller structures that are combined in this intricate and sprawling text. Now the levels of narration (sub-chapters of 3.2.), and the questions of narrators (3.3.1 and 3.3.2), narrative time and the boundaries of the "work" (3.3.3.) will be inspected more methodically. These are connected to each other and there is some overlapping. As the text is so vast, all instances of multiple levelling cannot be covered. The analysis will deal with F(I), the major book 3, and the embeddings of the major books 6-10 and 12-13 to look at various levels and narrators.

As a rule, in the MBh the levels of narration are more clearly separated than in the Vedic material. The reason for this is the emphasis put on the narrative situation and to the roles of the narrator and the narratee, which all imitate a real-life storytelling situation. The narrators and narratees are named and many of them are characters in the narratives. However, the repetition of narratives, by giving first summary and then the full tale, complicates the scheme, as well as the number and variety of levels, narrators and narratives which are connected to each other in several ways. The text of the Vulgate version is more complex in this respect than that of the Critical Edition.

In the MBh the framing is used abundantly both on vertical and on horizontal level. Vertically the embeddings can descend onto fifth level, although usually the depth of the embedding does not show, because the outer frames are in these cases pushed into background: this must be a deliberate technical move because the alternative would easily

[701] The final books make clear that the strength of the *dharma* of the main character Yudhiṣṭhira has saved the day: without his right choices the tragedy of the war would have been completed by total loss of hope for the future.
[702] For the most part in the same words and phrases as in the very beginning.

cause confusion about who tells what to whom. In F(I) and F(II) there is only one narrator in each, but inside the F(II) the number of narrators multiplies, so that for example in the book 3 (*Āraṇyakaparvan*) there are eight horizontal third-level narrators of embedded stories, if one includes also Arjuna, who tells of his adventures in the heaven of Indra. Under this "medial" level there is again no multiplication: the narrators of third level do not tell stories which include multiple narrators.

3.2.1 The levels of F(I)

The first outer frame, where the primary narrator is Ugraśravas (the Bard), contains the whole of the second outer frame F(II) as an embedding and in addition to that a string of shorter embedded and inserted narratives. They were described together with the other parts of the F(I) in 3.1.1., and now it is time to look closer at their levels and their relations with each other.

The F(I) is positioned for the most part in the beginning[703], in the first major book of the MBh ("The Book of the Beginning"), in which it takes up the minor books 1-5 and a part of the minor book 6. In other places (books 15 and 18) there are only short passages in both.[704]

If one looks at the frames from the angle of chronology of "the story"[705], F(I) would be a frame on a third level. The first narration in the chain[706] was ascribed to Vyāsa, who is also an author-in-the-text, and the narratee was Vaiśaṃpāyana together with his fellow-students. The second narrating was done by Vaiśaṃpāyana, and the narratee was Janamejaya, but there were others present also in this occasion, among them the bard

[703] The fact that the F(I) is not closed as neatly as F(II), and its contents (the introduction and the summaries of the work plus the back-stories of F(II)) makes it look like a preface or an introduction, which both refer to parts of a text that are more external to the work than frames. But as there is a narrative situation in the F(I) which highlights the transmission of the work from one narrator to another and a back-story that provides the setting of the narrative situation of F(II) and in theory surrounds it, it must be analysed as a frame. See 3.3.1.

[704] The major and minor books could be also taken as embeddings of the whole work and frames for the text that is contained in them. Here I treat them as formal entities, like chapters of a novel, that belong to the external arrangement of the work and the domain of the "literary work" (see the Diagram 1a p. 27).

[705] The distinction between "the story" (the happenings of the narrative in a logical order) and "the discourse" (the narrative form in which the story is presented) appears here again: see p. 19 n. 72.

[706] The MBh had been narrated before this narration in the heaven to Śuka an to the gods, but that is another chain and does not lead towards "the text of the MBh". For the chain of narrations, see Diagram 11 in the chapter 3.3.2.

Ugraśravas. Then the MBh is narrated for the third time by Ugraśravas, and the narratees are Śaunaka and his priests. (This last narration seems to happen two times: see below.) In "the discourse" this third telling is, however, the first one, and the other two are embedded in it, F(II) as a concrete text, and Vyāsa's narrative as a virtual text, something that is told about. So the order of narrating in "the story" and "the discourse" go into opposite directions (see the chapter 3.3.3.).

The narrative levels of the F(I) are as follows. Ugraśravas is a character inside the fictional narrator's narrative[707] who acts also as a narrator. In the Diagram 1a (p. 26) he is inside the narrated world, in the Diagram 1b (p. 27) he is on the primary level of narrative. What he narrates belongs to the quoted world. Vaiśampāyana's frame (F(II)) is one of the quoted worlds that he creates. There are further, secondary quoted worlds inside the primary quoted worlds of F(II). Thus there are at least three levels of narration present throughout the MBh: (i) the (primary) level of the narrated world (the narrative situation of F (I)), (ii) the (secondary) level of the quoted world (what is narrated by the narrator of F(I)) and (iii) the (third) level of the secondary quoted world (what is narrated by the narrator of F(II)).

The narration of Ugraśravas moves both in the quoted world of "now" (when he tells how he listened to Vaiśaṃpāyana, visited the scene of the main narration and came to the Naimiṣa Forest) and the quoted world of "then" (when he tells (embedded) stories of legendary or mythical past). The minor books 1-2 move on both levels. First Ugraśravas tells his own story ("now"), then he gives a summary of the narrative he is going to tell: this is an embedded narrative of things past ("then"). There is also an embedding on a secondary level in the minor book 1: Ugraśravas quotes a narrative in which the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra is the narrator.[708] In the minor book 2 Ugraśravas gives a list of minor books and decribes the contents of the major books in a form of "mini-narratives". This way to introduce a narrative by a summary or a synopsis of its contents is a typical mode of storytelling in the MBh. The first introduction (minor books 1-2) concerns the whole work (see Diagram 7a p. 206). There are also semi-independent narratives that are not presented in the diagram, e.g. the story of Bhārgava Rāma in the beginning of the minor book 2 and the story of Dhaumya Āyoda, the guru in the beginning of the story of Uttaṅka in book 3 who gives his disciples hard time.

[707] For the narrators, see p. 19-21.
[708] Of the mode of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's narrative, see p. 175-176.

The minor book 3 contains two embedded stories on the secondary level. The second of these stories ("Uttaṅka") is connected to an embedded story of the minor book 5. In book 4 there is a new narrative situation and also new narrative style, as the narratee is Śaunaka, who takes part to the narration with his questions which also contain summaries. This will be discussed later in detail. Again, of the two embedded stories of this book the second ("Ruru") is connected to the minor book 5.

The book 5 is most complex of the books of the F(I). Ugraśravas tells a narrative which is continuously interrupted by the narratee Śaunaka so that it becomes a chain of back-stories. The first narrative he starts to tell, "The story of Āstīka and the snake sacrifice" (1) that connects to the narrative situation for the F(II), is the main storyline, but it is not actually realized until much later, because Ugraśravas, after promising to tell the story of Āstīka, tells instead the story of his father Jaratkāru (2^1) which could be called the first digression. Then (2) is interrupted by a second digression, "The story of the curse of the mother of snakes" (3), which is interrupted by "The story of the churning of the ocean" (4, third digression). Then Ugraśravas picks up (3), finishes it and tells a sequel to it, "The story of Garuḍa" (5). This story is interrupted by an embedded narrative (6), "The story of the elephant and the tortoise", told by Kaśyapa, then continued and interrupted again, by a digression to "The story of Kaśyapa" (7), and finally completed after this. Then follows a new narrative, "The story of snake Vāsuki and his sister" (8) which runs so far that it reaches the story (2), that of Jaratkāru. But before it starts again, an interruption by Śaunaka causes a digression and Ugraśravas tells "The story of Parikṣit" (9, first version). Only after that he gets hold of the story of Jaratkāru (2) and tells it again from the beginning and goes on until he gets to the birth of Āstīka. Then Ugraśravas leaps to the second version of "The story of Parikṣit" (9(2)), because the first version was not narrated to the king Janamejaya but to Śaunaka, and Janamejaya must also hear the story to get angry and order a snake sacrifice so that Āstīka can interrupt it. Now Janamejaya hears it in an embedded narrative from his councillors. He orders a snake sacrifice, and Ugraśravas can finally tell "The story of Āstīka and the snake sacrifice" (1).

In this extraordinary sequence there are multiple embeddings: eight stories that Ugraśravas tells as horizontal second-level embeddings (1-5, 7-9(1)) and two third-level embeddings inside (5) and (2^2), with other narrators (6 and 9(2)). More remarkable is that, as seen above, almost all the narratives are told as digressions that interrupt the story that is told before them.

Digression is a “poetical figure” that is not often discussed in narratology. Its literary use has been studied mostly in Homer's works, in which it adds a realistic touch, and in 18th century European novels (Swift, Sterne, Diderot), in which it is used to satiric or humorous ends. Some recent theorists have seen it as a realistic reflection of the movement of thought and speech[709] or an act of defiance against the preoccupation with the plot that is rampant also in narratology[710]. Nevertheless, the chain of digressions of the minor book 5 cannot be explained by any of these ideas. In my opinion, this kind of digression would be best analysed as a special type of embedding. In the first narrative there is a trigger, some reference or a parcel of information which provides a link to another narrative. E.g. in the story of the curse of the mother of the snakes, it is the horse Uccaiḥśravas. He has appeared from the ocean when gods and demons churned it: click, this tale must be told and the other tale can wait.

All of the digressive stories except "the churning of the ocean" one are back-stories, i.e. they are relevant to the main narrative, because their plots lead back to the curse which is the reason of the snake sacrifice and also “produces” Āstīka who will interrupt the sacrifice. It is interesting that the two third-level embeddings are, on the contrary, both real digressions: they do not contribute anything to the main narrative. An embedding is also sometimes defined as a digression, a break in the frame story.[711]

The interruptions and digressions contribute to the mode of the presentation, commented in the chapter 3.1.1. The narratives are told in “waves” which surge forwards, retreat and again proceed. The Diagram 7a below shows the rudimentary scheme of the narratives in the minor books 1-5 and their relation to the F(I) and the MBh as a whole. It clarifies the complexities of the minor book 5. The stories (1) - (9(1)), told by Ugraśravas, are all on secondary level, even though their mutual relations are not equal, as shown in the Diagram 6. The story of Parikṣit (9(1)) and (9(2)) and the story of Jaratkāru (2^1) and (2^2) are told two times.

The way that the Jaratkāru story (2) is repeated also illustrates one feature of the narrative strategy of the MBh. The first telling (2^1) is a summary which compresses the second half of the story into a few stanzas. The second telling (2^2) is not a different version, like the Parikṣit story (9 (2))[712], but a retelling which amplifies the first version.

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[709] Atkin 2011.
[710] Frederick 2012.
[711] See e,g, Pier 2014: 21.
[712] One may ask why the first version of the story of Parikṣit finds fault with the king but the second does not, and why there are differences in the happenings in the forest and the meeting of Takṣaka and

It can be said that the story (2^1) contains all the back-stories (3-9). It is interrupted and halted while they are narrated, and then it returns in the form of (2^2), adding a detailed description of the marriage of the two Jaratkārus and the happenings in the snake sacrifice. Thus, the main story arc of Āstīka and the sacrifice (1) contains a summary of the story (2) and a full version of it (everything from the (3) forward to the end of the minor book 5). I quote the ending of the summarizing first version of "The story of Jaratkāru" (1.13.29-14.1-3) to illustrate this point. The translation is by van Buitenen.

[*The Bard said*:] Henceforth this brahmin of strict vows [= Jaratkāru] roamed the earth, searching for a wife to set up house, but he did not find her. One day the brahmin went into a forest and, calling to mind the words of his forebears and longing for a maiden who was to be given him as an alms, he softly wept his three words.

Vāsuki proffered his sister as a gift and accepted him, but he did not accept her, thinking, "She does not bear my name." For this was the plan of the great-spirited Jaratkāru: "I shall take my namesake for a bride if she is offered me freely." The wise and powerful ascetic Jaratkāru said to Vāsuki: "What is your sister's name? Tell me the truth, Snake!"

Vāsuki said: She is my younger sister Jaratkāru. Jaratkāru![713] Accept her as your wife — I offer you the slim-waisted girl. I have kept her for you until now — take her, excellent brahmin.

The Bard said: Now, great scholar of the Veda, the Snakes had once been cursed by their mother: "Fire who is driven by Wind shall burn you at Janamejaya's sacrifice." It was to appease this curse that the princely Snake gave his sister to the great-spirited seer of good vows. And he accepted her with the ritual that is found in the Rules. A son was born to her: the strong-willed Āstīka, great-spirited ascetic and master of the Vedas and their branches, impartial to all the world, who dispelled the fears of his father and mother. Then, after a long span of time, Janamejaya, king of men, descendant of Pāṇḍu, offered up a great sacrifice known as the Session of the Snakes, so we hear. As this sacrifice went on for the destruction of the Snakes, the most glorious Āstīka had the Snakes freed from the curse. He saved the Snakes, his maternal uncles, and all the other Snakes as well, and saved his forebears with his offspring and austerites. With manifold vows and Vedic studies, O brahmin, he acquitted himself of his debts: the Gods he satisfied with sacrifices of various stipends, the seers with his scholarship, and his ancestors with progeny. Having taken away his ancestors' heavy burden Jaratkāru of strict vows went to heaven with his fathers. After he had obtained a son as well as unequaled merit of Law, the hermit Jaratkāru went to

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Kāśyapa. 9(1) and 9(2) are both present in the same book 5 and thus are not products of "the double introduction". It may be that the councillor has a hidden agenda to tell the story in a way that it makes Janamejaya thirst for revenge. This agenda is, however, not revealed. Maybe there has been a version in which Uttaṅka has been the narrator of the (9(2))?

[713] The fact that the ascetic and Vāsuki's sister carry both this unusual name seems to have some other significance than to indicate that the male Jaratkāru is extremely reluctant to marry. To this may be added that Śaunaka asks in the frame what the name means, and Ugraśravas draws from his sleeve an ad hoc etymology which makes Śaunaka laugh. An inside joke of some kind? Maybe an ironic comment on the intricate and highly artificial network of causalities and explanations which the narrator and the narratee have woven to produce "the narrative of Āstīka"?

heaven after a very long life-span. I have now narrated this Tale of Āstīka as I have heard it. Pray tell me, tiger of the Bhṛgus, what else should I recount?
Śaunaka said: [...] Your father was always attentive to our wishes ― now pray tell this tale as your father used to tell it![714]

The first version of (2) quoted above presents itself as "the tale of Āstīka", but it is in fact a summary of this tale: it is not told how exactly Āstīka freed the snakes from the curse: this told only much later. This version ends by describing what happened to Jaratkāru after the snake sacrifice, so it looks like a frame story for the tale of Āstīka. But within the text of the minor book 5 it is the other way round (see the Diagram 7a). The first version also says nothing about the reason for the curse that lead to the sacrifice.[715] The second version (3-9), coming after the first, corrects this by providing the back-stories and their back-stories, proceeds then to the snake sacrifice and gives a full and vivid description of its interruption by Āstīka with suitable pauses of suspense.

Moreover, the minor books 1-5, seen as a one separate sequence, can be said to contain three successive sets of this tripartite narrative scheme. First, Ugraśravas begins "the tale" of the MBh with a summary of the MBh and proceeds with "the full tale" which starts with back-tales (the minor books 3 and 4)[716] and after this catches up "the core tale" (the narrative situation of F(II)). He constructs this core tale, "the tale of Āstīka" (the minor book 5) in a similar way (summary > back-tales > full tale). When Vaiśaṃpāyana begins his narration in the minor book 6, he too starts with a summary, after which he tells the back-tales ("The ancestors") before getting into "the core tale" ("The story of the Bharata war").

In the diagram 7a the most important connections between the narratives are indicated by dotted lines with arrows. By no means are these the only ones. The number of intratextual references within the MBh is so great that only some of the recurrent motifs and stories, parallels and correspondences can be picked up here. "The story of the great battle" which is embedded in the minor book 1 and serves as a second part of the first summary of the MBh, has a counterpart, "the frame of Saṃjaya" of the books 6-9 (see chapter 3.2.2.), in which the roles of the narrator and narratee are reversed and the story

[714] After Śaunaka's words Ugraśravas starts to tell the story of the curse of the mother of snakes.
[715] In addition, this summary is not accurate. It tells that Āstīka saved all the snakes, but in the full story it is clear that many snakes die before Āstīka has arrived to the place of sacrifice.
[716] Formally the narratives of these books are back-tales, although they are more loosely connected to the minor book 5 than the embedded stories of the minor book 5 to its main narrative.

is told in full. The summary, spoken by the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, is chronologically posited only after "the frame of Saṃjaya", as in it the war is over and the king repeats in formulaic verses what he has heard from Saṃjaya. But placed proleptically in the beginning it is more effective, anticipating the raw horror of the war that is presented in the books 6-9.

The tripartite narrative strategy of the F(I) and F(II) is highlighted in the Diagram 7b. The relations between the successive triads are somewhat complicated, as the boxes in the diagram indicate. The first summary of Ugraśravas envelopes everything that follows, and his "full tale" envelops the narrative situation of F(II), most of all the tale of Āstīka, which in its turn envelops F(II) and all that it contains.

Of other repeated elements that operate on the thematic level, the motifs of snakes and namesakes have been mentioned in the description. There is also the motif of fire that is connected with the snakes: the bite of the snake king Takṣaka is fiery, so that when he threatens the sage Kāśyapa he can set a tree into fire by biting it. When he attacks Parikṣit, the tree pillar of the king is enveloped in flames because of his poisonous bite, and the king feels this heat after a bite as a mortal fever, and the snake Vāsuki gets fever when he "sympathizes" with his relatives on earth who are comsumed in the snake sacrifice of the king Janamejaya. In the underworld Uttaṅka is able to produce fire by blowing into the arse of a giant horse, who is really Agni, the fire god, and the heat that scorches Takṣaka gives him foretaste of the pyre in the snake sacrifice. Fires occur all over the MBh: later in the major book 1 the lacquer house burns, and Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa burn the Khāṇḍava Forest to kill the snakes, most of all Takṣaka, but all other creatures perish as well. Long afterwards Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī will die in a forest fire. The war of the Bhāratas is of course the greatest fire of all, a hellfire that destroys almost the whole world. It also acts as a frame for all the "fiery narratives" it contains.

The tripartite narrative strategy, on the other hand, is reflected in the connection of the characters and narratives which are repeated in the F(II). Events are foreshadowed, there are mirror stories and parallels. Boons, curses and predictions give a foretaste of the force of similar performatives in the main narrative. The sibling rivalry of the Kadrū and Vinatā and the enmity of the men and snakes prefigure the antagonism between Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas. The narrative returns sever to the setting of the F(I), Naimiṣa Forest, in the story of five Indras and in the story of Balarāma's pilgrimage. Uttaṅka appears again in the Book 14 and Āstīka in the Book 15. The fate of the lizard Ruru is echoed in the story of king Nṛga in the Book 13 (see p. 223). The tale of Bhārgava Rāma is repeated many times, and in addition, his presence, like that of the ancient seers, is strecthed to the main

narrative, as he is said to be the teacher of Karṇa, Droṇa and Bhīṣma. Janamejaya's role as a narratee of F(II) is anticipated by his appearance as a character in the tales of the minor book 3. All these elements reiterate the scheme of multiple narrating which is established from the beginning by the structure of summary/back-story/full (present) story.[717]

The three boxes in the Diagram 7a indicate the two outer frames and a third frame in which "The story of Āstīka and the snake sacrifice" is put inside the narrative situation of the F (II). The relation of these frames is complicated. The F(II) covers both the narrating of the MBh by Vaiśaṃpāyana (of which Ugraśravas tells about in F(I)) and the snake sacrifice of the king Janamejaya which happen in the same time. The narrative of the snake sacrifice, however, is in the F(I), and in the storyworld of the MBh it also is a frame for the narrative of Vaiśaṃpāyana (F(II)), which spans from the first major book to the eighteeth, which is the last, and from the minor book 6 to the minor book 98. Of the hundred minor books that the summary in the second minor book lists. Only "the Appendix of the genealogy of Hari" (99) and "the Book of Future" (100) fall outside F(II). All that is inside F(II) is marked in the diagram as being the MBh^1. The MBh^2 contains the whole text narrated by the general narrator. (See 3.3.3.).

[717] The Mbh extends also outside its frames. Vyāsa is traditionally said to be the composer of other texts (the Vedas etc.), and Śaunaka is not only a narratee of the stories told by Ugraśravas and character whom the protagonists meet in the Kāmyaka Forest in the Book 3, but an important teacher and grammarian and the author of the mythological compendium *Bṛhatdevatā* and the *Ṛgveda-Prātiśākhya* which deals with the phonetics of the *Ṛgveda*.

Diagram 7a. The narrative levels of the MBh

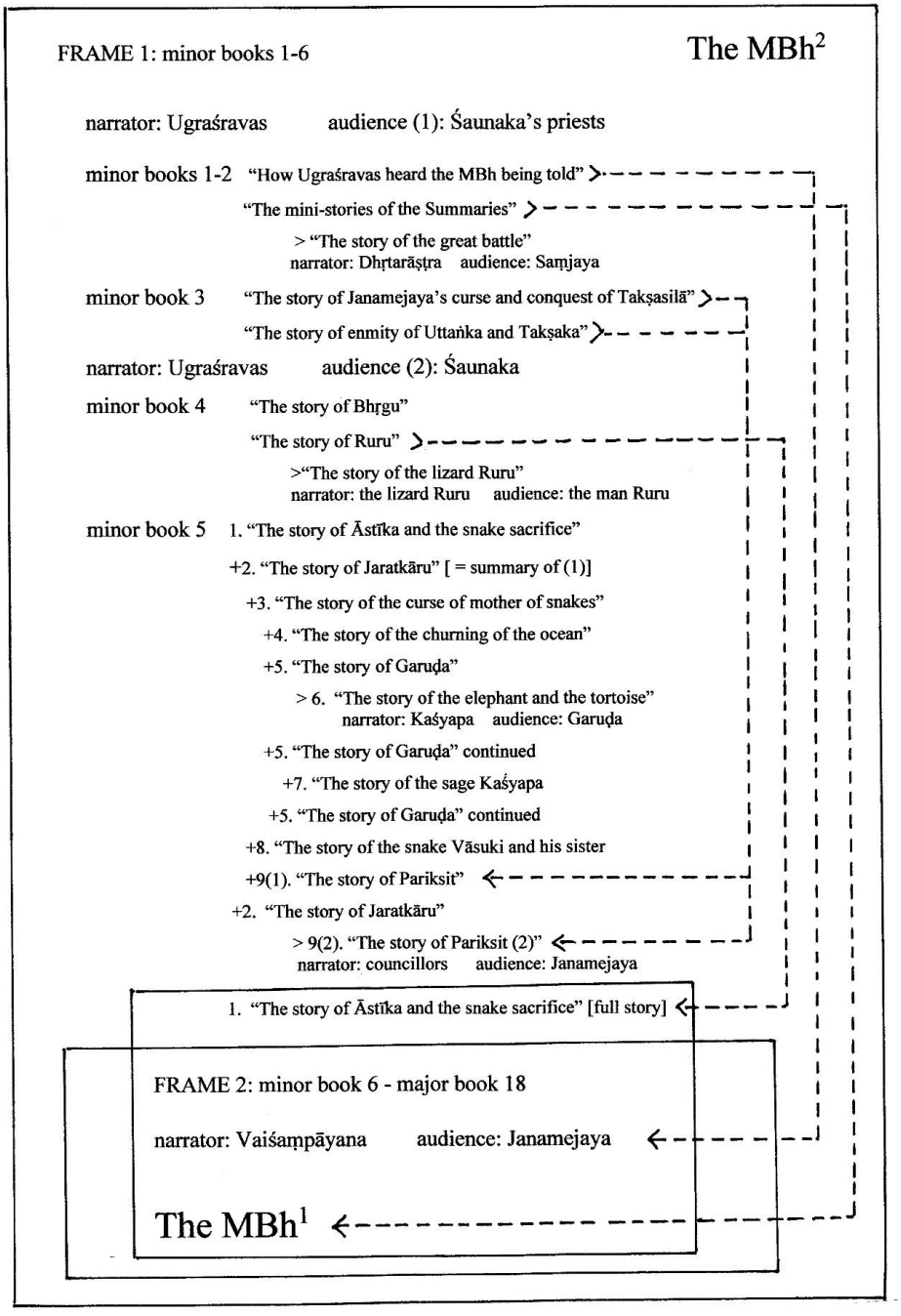
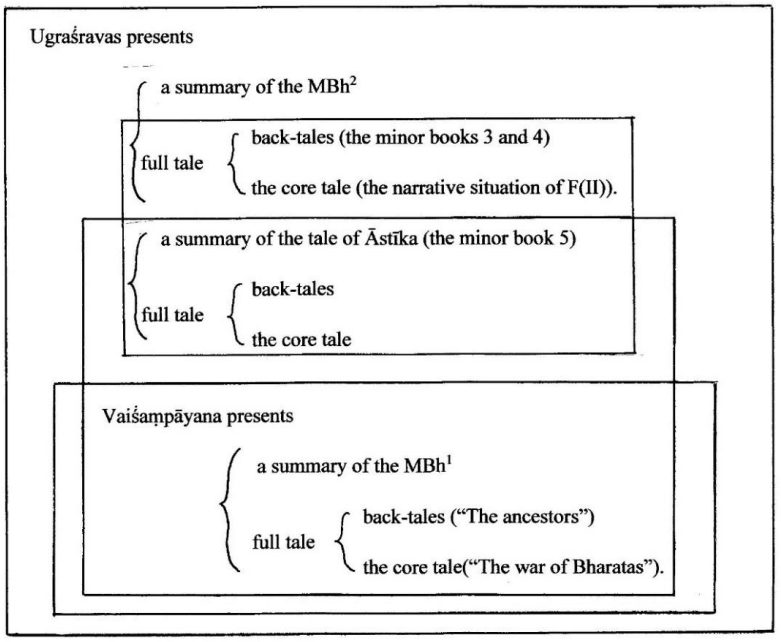


Diagram 7b: the tripartite narrative strategy of the MBh



The no-man's-land between F(I) and F(II) bends the narrative time and relation of the levels. When Āstīka rushes to interrupt the sacrifice, he is a metaleptic intruder from F(I) who appears in the narrative situation of F(II) to bring the sacrifice and, with it, also the narration to an end, whereas on a textual level it has scarcely begun (we have heard only a short summary of the main narrative). In this way he acts like Śaunaka, who knows everything beforehand and still guides the direction of the narration with his questions, and Vyāsa, who is a an author as well a narrated character inside his own narrative. The narrative settings of the F(I) and F(II) provide their own set of frames, but this, like the invisible backward framing from Vyāsa to Ugraśravas, is not included in the diagram. In addition, in the MBh the war is juxtaposed with ritual: it is a bloody offering to the gods in which the humans are sacrificed, a "ritual of battle" (*raṇasattra*). Three rituals are thus put inside each other: in the middle of Śaunaka's ritual (1: 12-year *sattra*) Ugraśravas

tells a tale of another ritual (2: *sarpasattra*) in which a tale of still another ritual (3: *raṇasattra*) was narrated.[718]

The "double introduction" (the beginnings of the minor books 1 and 4) and the prose form of the minor book 3 were features that earlier did not interest scholars, because the outer frames were regarded as late additions and therefore superfluous and without interest. The book 3 has not yet received sufficient attention,[719] but the other question has been a subject of several interesting articles since the 1960s. The fact is that Ugraśravas arrives two times to the Naimiṣa Forest in all manuscripts, so there is no earlier version which has only one introduction and one arrival.[720] Mehta was among the first to draw attention to the two arrivals; he called the text "a strange patchwork", as there apparently had been no attempt to fuse the two sections.[721] Mehta came to the conclusion that there were two versions of the story of Janamejaya's sacrifice, and "the redactor of the MBh" wanted to preserve both. So he combined the older prose narrative (book 3) and younger version composed in epic verse (book 5). Then he put the book 4 in between because of the subject of snakes in the story of Ruru. This combination was then completed with the books 1-2 with their "Purāṇic" content.[722]

Oberlies offers a more radical interpretation.[723] He bases his argument on three points: (1) "the versions" that are mentioned in the text itself (1.51.[724]), (2) the first specific mention of the snake sacrifice in the text, and (3) the differences in the books that make up F(I). He also believes that the outer frames were the last sections that were added into the MBh. According to Oberlies, there originally was only a "Vasu version"[725] which began with the minor book 6, from 1.55. on, with perhaps a brief summary of contents in the very beginning given by Vaiśaṃpāyana who was the narrator of this Vasu text. The

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[718] This scheme of *sattras* inside each other may or may not be influenced by the *sattras* themselves. The impetus could come from various sources: from the old practice of putting old texts inside new texts, from the subversive nature of the *sattra*, and from the idea that the narrative situation and the "invention" of a narrator-narratee-chain provided the possibility to put narrators inside the narratives of other narrators. See 3.3.1. and 3.4. below.

[719] In addition to the *Habilitationsscrift* of Wilhelm (1965), only Feller 2004 has discussed the *Pauṣyopaparvan* at length.

[720] See Sukthankar 1933: lxxxvii; Mehta 1973: 548; Adluri 2011: 153-154

[721] Mehta 1973.

[722] Mehta thought that the redactor was under a Bhṛgu influence and therefore he added the story of Bhṛgu and put Śaunaka in as a narratee in F (I).

[723] Oberlies 2008: 87-98.

[724] "There are brahmins who learn *The Bhārata* from Manu onward, others again from *The book of Āstīka* onward, others again from the tale of Uparicara [Vasu] onward." (translation by van Buitenen.) Manu is mentioned in Book 1, 1.30; and the tale of Uparicara is 1.57. (in the minor book 6, and in F(II)). See chapter 3.3.3.

[725] Vasu is the father of Satyavatī who is the mother of Vyāsa.

frame, when it first was added, was a combination of the book of Pauṣya (3) and the book of Āstīka (5). This "Āstīka version" would have been a product of Vedic circles[726], and for this reason the *sarpasattra* of the Vedic sources[727] has served as an inspiration for both the main story in this version (the names of the protagonists) and the frame (the *sarpasattra* of Janamejaya). This version had Āstīka, not Vaiśaṃpāyana, as the narrator: Āstīka tells the whole of the MBh to Janamejaya in order to postpone the snake sacrifice.[728] The book 4, especially the story of Ruru, has been added as a "switch-narrative" that links the old and the new versions. The beginning of the "Manu version" (1.27 onward) was added last, with a list of contents and a narrative of a 12-year *sattra*, its model also taken from the ritual sources.[729] Along with a new frame Āstīka lost the role of narrator, but the book of Āstīka retained its position as the virtual frame of the snake sacrifice, even though it is now textually positioned before the F(II) and not around it.

This theory of cumulative frames is believable as such, but too much of it depends on how one interprets the information given in 1.51. It is also dubious whether one can plausibly reconstruct so many changes of the overall narrator of the MBh.[730] One of the latest commentators of the double introduction, Adluri,[731] criticizes not only Mehta and Oberlies but also other scholars who analyse the MBh by reconstructing earlier versions of the text. According to his approach[732] all the answers how to read the MBh must come from the text itself. He maintains that all the different "beginnings" are essential for the MBh, because they do different things. There is the narrative beginning (from 1.57. on), a sacrificial beginning (from the book 5 onwards) and the cosmological

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[726] Oberlies 2008: 93-95.
[727] The *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (XXV.15) and the *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra* (XVII.18). See the chapter 2.4. above.
[728] Oberlies calls this *Hals(lösung)erzählung*, the tale told for saving (one's) neck, similar to the stories told by Sheherazade in the *Thousand and One Nights*.
[729] Oberlies believes that the order of the two frames is copied from the order of the rituals in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (first the 12-year *sattra*, then the *sarpasattra*). See, however, 3.4. below.
[730] Especially "the Āstīka version" proposed by Oberlies looks fragile. It is not probable that narrators would have been switched and Āstīka would have been the original narrator of the Vaiśaṃpāyana frame. The frames are not necessarily later than the material which they frame and, in addition, there would be reasons to consider the F(I) to be of the same age as the F(II), taking into account the possibility that the inspiration for both was taken from the same *brāhmaṇa* text. Both have their functions. As the MBh is full of different kinds of embeddings, it is clear that at least the written (and consolidated) form of the text was using framing, so they cannot be regarded as "a late addition". They are also intratextually connected to the rest of the text. The emphasis on the narrative situation, the idea of narrating to somebody something that "one has seen /heard" is central to the MBh, and guides the use of frames. See 3.3.1.
[731] Adluri 2011.
[732] Adluri calls his method of studying the MBh hermeneutical. Philosophical or methodological hermeneutics embraces a great variety of views, but supposedly it means here "interpretation which arises from the sensitive listening of and experiencing the text".

and genealogical beginnings (1.1. and 1.4., the "Manu" version). The first of these contains "a historical summary of the author's origin, the epic itself, the transmission from author to bard, and the origin of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas and their battle"[733] which provide the mnemonic and hermeneutical apparatus to read the MBh. The second introduction establishes the frame of the sacrifice and its meaning. Like Oberlies, Adluri sees the two introductions as incommensurable. This is shown e.g. in the fact that in the first introduction Ugraśravas tells that he has heard the MBh from Vaiśaṃpāyana in the snake sacrifice, but in the second he says nothing about this, but says instead that he has learnt "the tales" from his father Lomaharṣana. But for Adluri this indicates that these are not two versions from different ages, but two different narrations of the MBh. According to Adluri, they "run parallel to each other until they finally come together in the *Āstīkaparvan* to give us the main body of the epic."[734]

Adluri's reading is in many ways convincing, even though he is guilty of overinterpretation in some points, e.g. the tale of Uttaṅka. The parallelism of the two beginnings can be a feature I referred to earlier (p. 161), i.e. there is a "paratactic aggregation" on structural level. The two introductions have different functions and different narrative situations, and the narrator has a different narratee and different sources (first Vaiśaṃpāyana, then Lomaharṣana). Still these two separate narrations lead to the same embedded narrative of F(II).[735] It may well be that very little has been "redacted" and the two introductions are simply tacked in one after another, as they cannot exist in written version side by side. So we would have an optional beginning like this:

The cosmological beginning (1, F(I))
-> the sacrificial beginning (FII) -> the MBh
The genealogical beginning (2, F(I))

Still a couple of questions remains. The first, inconlusive story in "the Book of Pauṣya" in which Janamejaya and his brother are performing a sacrifice, seems to need an explanation. The snake-born brahman Somaśravas who has been employed by the king sounds promising (surely he will have some role in a story that is full of snakes!) but he is simply put aside. Perhaps he has been some kind of an understudy for Āstīka, but his

[733] Adluri 2011: 171.
[734] Adluri 2011: 164.
[735] Ugraśravas indicates that the second telling (with Śaunaka) was before the first (with the seers only). But this may by a later addition.

storyline was forgotten or dismissed? The explanation of Adluri which connects the first sacrifice, the conquest of Takṣaśilā and Uttaṅka's visit to the king and revelation of the death of his father[736] is based on reading too much meaning in the events of the narrative. Saramā warns the king of an unseen danger, she does not say that the king has not secured his mortality. Uttaṅka does not blame the king for the conquest of Takṣaśilā but only for being idle, which means he is not revenging his father. Adluri leaves wisely the narrative of the sadistic guru which begins the story of Uttaṅka without explanation, for there is none to be found. And the end of the story of Āstīka is problematic: the interruption of the sacrifice should really happen only after Vaiśaṃpāyana has finished his narration in the end of the Book 18. But this last warp in time need not be be significant: it would be very inconvenient to try to stretch *The book of Āstīka* or even "the narrative of Āstīka and the snake sacrifice" (story (1) without the subtales) so that it would be form a F(III) inside F(II) and F(I).

Much depends also on how one interprets the structure of *The book of Āstīka*. If the first version of the story of Jaratkāru is not analysed as a summary, which is then followed by the full story, it looks more like a patchwork and invites a text-historical interpretation. But it may be seen to conform to the general repetitive and recursive mode of storytelling in the MBh, which simulates the real-life interactive storytelling situation[737]: first a summary, as a teaser or a trailer, and after that, as the narratee asks for more, the full story comprising of back-stories and the core story. Then there is no need to explain away repetition, for it serves a purpose.

One of the curious features of *The book of Āstīka* is its ending. In 1.53.22-23 Ugraśravas says: "May he who was born to Jaratkāru by Jaratkāru, the famous Āstīka, true to his word, guard me from the Snakes! Whoever shall think upon Asita, Ārtimat, and Sunītha[738], whether by day and night, shall be in no danger of Snakes."[739] And in 1.53.26. : "And when one has recited, or when one has listened to this epic of Āstīka, which is most conductive to Law and increasing merit, O brahmin, these illustrious exploits of the sage Āstīka from their very beginning, he shall nowhere encounter any danger from the Snakes." These are definitely charms against snakes, and bring into mind the Vedic charms which draw power from the narratives that precede them (see pp. 63-

[736] Adluri 2011: 166.
[737] See 3.3.1.
[738] Asita is a mythical sage. Maybe the others are also. The Vulgate has "Āstīka, Ārtimat..."
[739] van Buitenen's translation.

71 above). Is the story of Āstīka a retelling of some Vedic narrative, or does it simulate a Vedic text?[740]

Finally, there is also the option to regard the two introductions in their present form as two frames, so that F(I) = $F(I)^1$ and $F(I)^2$. Before he gets to the list of the hundred minor books of the MBh, Ugraśravas says to the seers (1.2.30) that he will narrate to them "the full story of *The Bhārata* from *The Book of Puloman* onward, as it was told at Śaunaka's session". Thus the first narrative situation with the seers as the audience would be a frame to the second, where Śaunaka is the narratee, and F(I) comprises of $F(I)^1$ (= the session with the seers) which has $F(I)^2$ (the session with Śaunaka and all of the MBh that follows it) as an embedding.

The problem is that the text, unlike Ugraśravas, does not present the $F(I)^2$ as an embedding. *The Book of Pulomān* (the minor book 4) begins with the voice of the general narrator, with Ugraśravas as a character, just as the $F(I)^1$. If we stick to the text, $F(I)^1$ and $F(I)^2$ are on the same narrative level. The way that Ugraśravas introduces himself in the beginning of the minor book 1 is also against this solution: he tells that he comes (via Sāmantapañcaka) from the snake sacrifice where he heard Vaiśaṃpāyana recite the MBh, and he will tell it just as he has heard it to have been narrated. But there are hints that he has heard the MBh also from his father: so this might be the version (= $F(I)^2$) that he has narrated to Śaunaka? No, because during the session with Śaunaka Ugraśravas tells about the snake sacrifice — which should have taken place only after the session with Śaunaka if it would be $F(I)^2$. Considering all these hindrances, it is not possible to see any $F(I)^2$ in the text.

I have presented the two introductions in the Diagram 7a as following each other, as they do in the text. If one is convinced about what Adluri has to say, they could also be posited side by side, representing two optional paths to the F(II).

In spite of the "indecision" which may be or may be not seen in the double introduction, the use of the multiple levels that are present in the F(I) shows already that the composers of the MBh are in full command of the mechanisms of framing and embedding. The narrative situation with an overt narrator and an active narratee is utilized to produce new narratives which shoot out like branches from each other.[741] The overt

[740] Another question about the F(I) and F(II) that has not yet been adequately answered is: why are the two outer frames are so devoted to snakes that have no part in the main narrative?

[741] The Critical Edition uses the metaphor of a tree when talking of the main characters of the narrative (1.1, 65-66) but the Vulgate expands it to refer to the MBh itself. Just after the passage about Gaṇeśa Ugraśravas proclaims (1.88ff., Ganguli's translation): "This work is a tree, of which the chapter of

narrator opens a possibility to add more embeddings and very probably it has given the impetus to provide the embeddings with their own narrators to add stories to the lower level. In the F(I) this is shown by the web of narratives in the minor book 5. Another useful device was to divide the narrative in three parts. This scheme could also have its roots in the real-life narrative situation.

3.2.2. The levels of F(II): the frame of Saṃjaya

The frame of Vaiśaṃpāyana, the contents of which were summarized in 3.1.2 above, has a lot of quoted dialogue, which every now and then leads to an embedded narrative that is narrated by one of the characters. In some occasions Vaiśaṃpāyana tells stories himself. There are also the two special embeddings of Saṃjaya and Bhīṣma, in which there is another narrator inside Vaiśaṃpāyana's narrative for long stretches while Vaiśampāyana and his narratee are silent and hidden (the *parvans* 6-9 and 12-13).

I will not count the first two "dips" of Ugraśravas (F(I)) as significant here: these are the one-liner of 2.46.4.[742] and the extensions of the Book 12 that are not in the Critical Edition.[743] Very different is, however, the crucial scene where F(I) mixes with the F(II) in an unique way, namely the section in which Janamejaya wishes to see his father, just as the survivors of the Bharata war are allowed to see their loved ones in the main narrative (*Putradarśanaparvan*, 15.43). As the protagonists of the main narrative and Janamejaya, who is a narratee in F(II) and a character in F(I), have a vision that transcends all-devouring death and time (*kāla*), all three levels of the Epic are allowed to intersect. Both of these operations made possible by the grace of "the Author" Vyāsa. It is quite

contents is the seed; the divisions called *Pauloma* and *Āstīka* are the root; the part called *Saṃbhava* is the trunk; the books called *Śābha* and *Araṇya* are the roosting perches; the books called *Araṇi* is the knitting knots; the books called *Virāṭa* and *Udyoga* the pith; the book named *Bhīṣma*, the main branch; the book called *Droṇa*, the leaves; the book called *Karṇa*, the fair flowers; the book named *Śalya*, their sweet smell; the books entitled *Strī* and *Aiṣika*, the refreshing shade; the book called *Śānti*, the mighty fruit; the book called *Aśvamedha*, the immortal sap; the denominated *Āśramavāsika*, the spot where it groweth; and the book called *Mausala*, is an epitome of the Vedas and held in great respect by the virtuous Brahmanas. The tree of the Bhārata, inexhaustible to mankind as the clouds, shall be as a source of livelihood to all distinguished poets."

[742] See p. 176 n. 601 above.

[743] 12.327, 331, 335 (in some manuscripts; in the Vulgata 12.340-341, 344, 347-348)

probable that this metaleptic mix of the levels was consciously devised by the composers to emphasize the singularity of this scene.

The very end of the Epic (18.5) is similar to the frame in the beginning, where F(II) and F(I) are shown as separate. F(II) is concluded and as Vaiśaṃpāyana ends his narration, it is necessary that Ugraśravas returns to do the same thing. The difference is that in the end only the voice of Ugraśravas is heard. He addresses his narratees and evokes the Naimiṣa Forest in his speech, but still he seems to be all alone (see 3.3.1. below).[744]

Next follows an analysis of levels and structures of the two large embeddings of Saṃjaya and Bhīṣma and of the Book 3 (*Āraṇyakaparvan*). Each of them will be discussed in a separate chapter.

"The frame of Saṃjaya" begins in the Book 6 (*Bhīṣmaparvan*). First, though, the narrative is on the level of the F(II) and Vaiśaṃpāyana answers to the question of the king Janamejaya ("How did these kings fight?") by describing the armies that have come to the battlefield. But in 16.2. Vaiśaṃpāyana's narrative zooms to Vyāsa, who is in the company of the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The sage asks whether he can give the blind king a boon so that he can see what is happening. The king declines: seeing with own eyes would be too painful for him. Still, he would like to *hear* what happens.[745] Vyāsa gives the gift of *divyacakṣus* (divine eye) to Saṃjaya, the charioteer (*sūta*) of the king, so that the king can hear "the history of the war" from him. The divine eye is also a literary device:[746] it makes Saṃjaya reliable (as he reports exactly what he sees) as well as all-seeing and omniscient (he is like the gods and also like "the Author" Vyāsa).[747] It also gives him a personal and heightened presence in the actual events of the war and ability to describe it vividly *as it happens*.[748]

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[744] Perhaps the reason for the defective narrative situation is that a narratee would have asked questions and the frame would have not been closed. But it would have been enough for Śaunaka to affirm the facts that were mentioned in the beginning: how wonderful the MBh is and what benefit one gets when listening to it.

[745] The king's choice reflects a psychological fact: it is much more shocking to see atrocities than to have a verbal report of them.

[746] This also proves that the composers of the MBh could make a difference between various grades of knowledge that the narrators could have. Ordinary people who do not have the means to the expansions of mental powers, like the sages and seers, know nothing besides what they have heard and what they have seen. Ugraśravas tells in F(I) only what he has heard from others, he cannot foresee things. There is the case of Āstīka, though (see p. 187).

[747] In this way the battle can be described as a panorama by one narrator, and there is no need to wonder how he had time and possibilities to be present everywhere.

[748] See Mangels 1994: 109-114. The wife of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, queen Gāndhārī, is also given a divine eye by Vyāsa in "The Book of Women" (11), so that she can look at the dead warriors in the battlefield. Gāndhārī is "blind" as she wears always a band over her eyes. See Mangels 1994: 139-140.

In 6.5. Vyāsa leaves and Saṃjaya takes the position of the narrator inside the narrative of Vaiśaṃpāyana. Questioned by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Saṃjaya follows the scheme of repetitive telling sketched in the preceding chapter. He does not start with a summary, however, but with the back-stories, and like Ugraśravas, retreats very far in space and time: he tells about everything that is around the battlefield, the earth and its creatures, the cosmos and the four ages, and the continents around India. Only after this he provides the summary by describing the battle and disclosing that Bhīṣma is mortally wounded. This is an anticipation, as the fall of Bhīṣma happens later, near the end of this major book, and is then narrated in great detail ("the full story").[749]

In these "War" books the events are seen through the eyes of Saṃjaya as they unfold, so the time is "now" on the level of this secondary quoted world. Saṃjaya talks both in the first person singular ("I") and the first person plural ("we"). His narratee, the old king, intervenes at times to wonder and lament the defeat of his sons, and in the same way as in the summary of the first book, Saṃjaya reminds him that all this happens because the king has been so thoughtless and his sons are so wicked.

Saṃjaya is the narrator also through the *Bhagavadgītā* (6. 23-40) which proceeds as the (quoted) dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. Like the narrative of Vaiśaṃpāyana, the narrative of Saṃjaya contains the dialogue of the characters and a handful of embedded tales. These may be analyzed to belong to the tertiary quoted world of Saṃjaya (and fourth narrative level)[750]. After the *Bhagavadgītā* (which is not a narrative) there is e.g. a fifth-level narrative, "The story of the birth of Kṛṣṇa" (6.61-64) which Bhīṣma tells to Duryodhana to reveal against whom he is really fighting and why he cannot win.[751] This is as deep as it gets: in the MBh there are no narratives on the sixth level. In the next book (*Śalyaparvan*) there are some smaller subtales. The first is told by Saṃjaya himself within his frame (7.119, "The story of Śini"). The other two are narrated just before the end of the book. Droṇa's son Aśvatthāman meets Vyāsa after the death of his father, and Vyāsa tells a short account how Nara (Arjuna) and Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa) were born in the world of gods (7.172). Vyāsa meets Arjuna and tells him the story of Śiva and the sacrifice of Dakṣa (7.173).

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[749] The books 6-9 are all structured like this. First Saṃjaya comes to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and tells which hero has fallen. Then he reports all that has happened until then and finishes with a detailed description of the death he had announced in the beginning.

[750] Or to a subordinated quoted world of fifth level.

[751] The chain of the successive levels is this section is here 1. the narrative of the fictive narrator about Ugraśravas > 2. the narrative of Ugraśravas about Vaiśaṃpāyana > 3. the narrative of Vaiśaṃpāyana about Saṃjaya > 4. the narrative of Saṃjaya about Bhīṣma > 5. the narrative of Bhīṣma about Kṛṣṇa.

There are also a couple of embedded narratives in the remaining two books. In the *Karṇaparvan* (Book 8) there are two narratives that are "proofs": they serve to prove the point of the narrator. Duryodhana narrates a story to the king Śalya when he asks him to be the charioteer of Karṇa (8.24). In "The story of Tripura" three demons practice austerities after the gods have defeated the demons (see p. 171 above) and get three mighty fortresses from Brahmā. To help the gods, Śiva destroys the fortresses in a mighty chariot driven by Brahmā himself. The story proves that Śalya should not feel humiliated to be asked to drive a chariot for Karṇa, as Brāhma himself was not reluctant to take this task. Soon after this Śalya tells a story to Karṇa (8.28). This is an animal fable, in which a crow invites a goose to flying contest: first the crow is faster, but when they fly over the ocean the crow gets tired, falls in the water and is rescued by the goose. The idea is that Karṇa is like the crow and Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa are like the goose: Śalya implies that in the long run Karṇa will be the loser.

The *Śalyaparvan* (9) has a string of embedded narratives, which is put in a section where the F(II) intervenes with the narrative of Saṃjaya. Before this there is a dramatic moment in 9.28: an enemy warrior is going to kill Saṃjaya with his sword. Then, all of a sudden, Vyāsa rushes into the battlefield and gives an order: "Saṃjaya must be left alive! Under no circumstances is he to be killed!"[752] This is a nice metaleptic touch: "the Author" steps in to protect his narrator! Maybe Saṃjaya is a bit shaken by the incident, because soon he takes rest and lets Vaiśaṃpāyana speak. In 9.33 Saṃjaya tells that Balarāma, the brother of Kṛṣṇa, appears in the battlefield and prepares to watch the fight. He has been away for forty-two days.[753] In 9.34 the question of the king Janamejaya shifts the narrative from the frame of Saṃjaya to the level of F(II). The king asks where Balarāma has been, and Vaiśaṃpāyana tells "the story of the pilgrimage of Balarāma" along the river Sarasvatī (9.34-53). The holy places (*tīrthas*) he visits are connected with various myths and consequently a series of small narratives follows[754]. Mostly Vaiśaṃpāyana narrates the tales, but some of them have a separate narrator, so they happen on the fourth level, like the narrative of Saṃjaya. This long digression is placed

[752] Not all of the mss. have this scene. See Mangels 1994: 123.
[753] He has left when the peace negotiations failed in 5.154.
[754] Hiltebeitel, in his study of the substories of the MBh (2005), includes only "Indra and Namuci" (9.42) and "The Vṛddha Kumārī" ("The Old Maiden", 9.51) of these stories among *upākhyānas*. But there are other interesting tales, e.g. the MBh version of the story of Ekata, Dvita and Trita (see pp. 96-99), stories of Skanda, of the enmity of Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha, and of seers like Asita Devala, Kuṇi Gārgya and Dālbhya Baka. The places visited include the Naimiṣa Forest and the Daṇḍaka Forest; the latter is linked with the adventures of Rāma.

in a strategic position to halt the main plot and raise the pressure before the final duel that signals the defeat of the Kauravas.

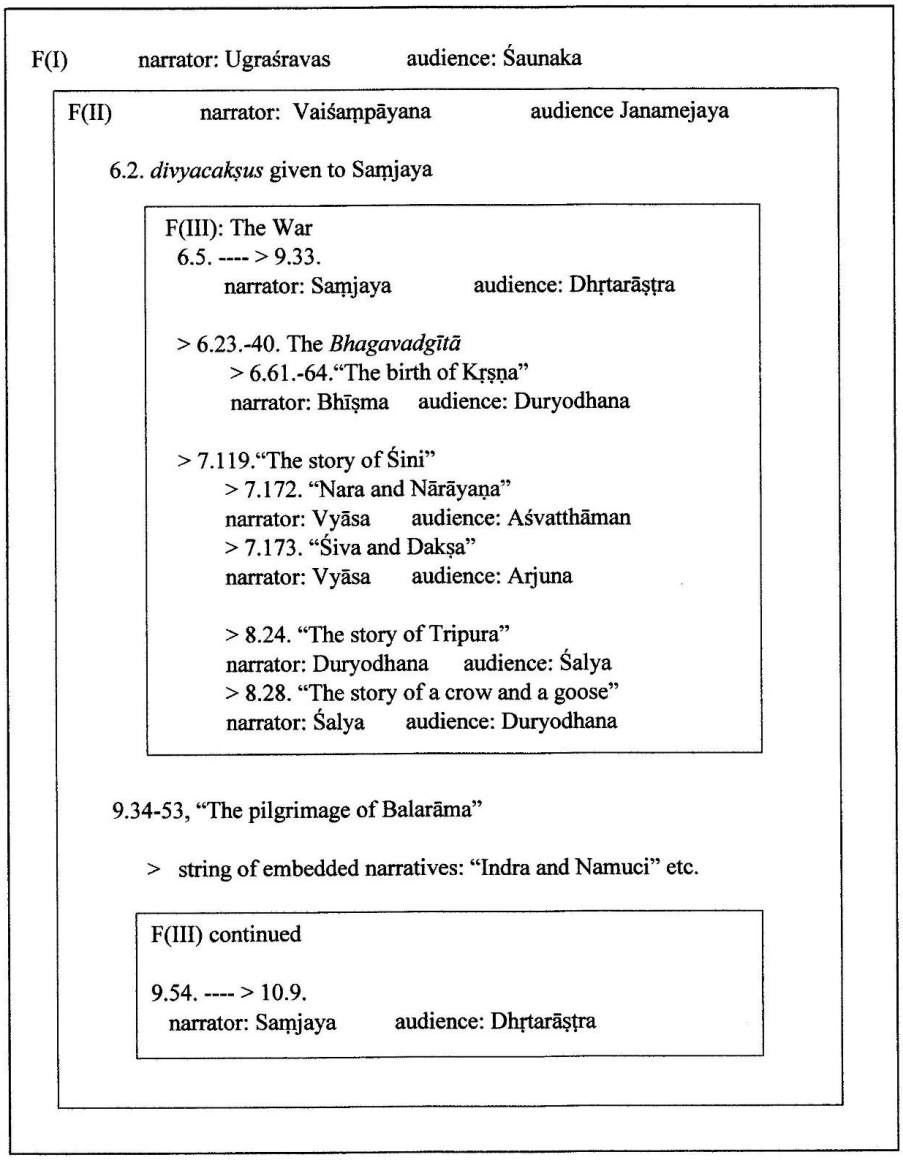
After hearing the last story Balarāma meets the sage Nārada, who tells him what has happened so far in the battle. Balarāma hurries back to see as Duryodhana and Bhīma start to fight with each other, and Vaiśaṃpāyana gives the role of the narrator back to Saṃjaya so that he can describe the duel and its aftermath (9.54-61.). Vaiśaṃpāyana returns briefly to explain to Janamejaya why Kṛṣṇa departs from the battlefield (9.62), but Saṃjaya is the narrator for the end of the book and the beginning of the next, *Sauptikaparvan* ("The book of the Sleeping Warriors"). In it Duryodhana dies, and this makes Saṃjaya to lose his *divyacakṣus*. So F(II) returns and Vaiśaṃpāyana resumes his narrative. He is the narrator for the end of this book and also for the Book 11.

In the "war books" the narrative of Saṃjaya consists most of the time of the description of violent fighting between armies and the individual heroes. These episodes are interrupted by dialogues in which characters make plans, negotiate, urge and persuade each other, summarize what has happened etc. In the frame the blind king also summarizes what has happened and laments it. He also acts as character in the narrative. There are fewer embedded narratives to interrupt the main story than in other books: the action dominates. Larger stretches of non-action, theological revelation or leisurely description, are in the beginning and in the end: the *Bhagavadgītā* and the pilgrimage of Balarāma.

The structure of "the narrative of Saṃjaya" (F(III)), the theme of which is "The War", is illustrated by the Diagram 7.[755] It is inside the two outer frames, F(I) and F(II). The frame of Vaiśaṃpāyana (F(II)) surrounds it and pushes through it during the flashback sequence which tells about the pilgrimage of Balarāma.

[755] See also Mangels 1994: 97-101.

Diagram. 8. The frame of Saṃjaya.



Inside F(III) there are embeddings, some of which are narrated by Saṃjaya himself (the *Bhagavadgītā* and "The story of Śini"); other tales have their own narrators. Saṃjaya is a narrator on a third level (inside F(II) which is inside F(I)) and the embedded narratives are fourth-level narratives. The network of the frame and the embedded narratives is not as intricate as in the F(I).

Some of the embeddings are narrated to defend an argument or explain something that has happened, but many are simply old stories, myths and legends, told for the fun of narrating, like the ones inluded in the pilgrimage sequence, where only the connection to the place visited supplies the motivation. Similar narratives are included in the pilgrimage section ot the *Āraṇyakaparvan*. Among the embedded narratives there are many reworkings of Ṛgvedic and brāhmaṇic narratives.

3.2.3. The levels of F(II): the frame of Bhīṣma

In the major books 12 and 13 there is also a great theme, like "The War" in the frame of Saṃjaya. It is "The Dharma", which is taught to Yudhiṣṭhira. For the most part the text of these books proceeds as a dialogue of Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma, and although Vaiśaṃpāyana is behind every "Bhīṣma said" and "Yudhiṣṭhira said", his voice disappears for very long streches of text. This is practical, because the dialogue would become very cumbersome with the chain "Vaiśaṃpāyana said: 'Bhīṣma said'" repeated time after time, even more so, as the speech of Bhīṣma is full of quotations from the dialogue of other characters and narratives which pour *ad infinitum* from his mouth. Especially the Book 12, "The Book of Peace" (*Śāntiparvan*), is extensive: it is the longest of the *parvans* of the MBh.

Although both books teach *dharma*, their tone and the narrative rhythm is different. The teachings of the *Śāntiparvan* are heavy and ponderous, and the embedded dialogues and narratives reflect this. The *Anuśāsanaparvan* ("Book of Instruction") is lighter both in its structure and in regard of the subjects of the narratives.

The meaning of *dharma* is elaborated by Bhīṣma (and others) within blocks with headings that are given in the text. 12. 1-128 concerns *rājadharma*, "the dharma of kings", 12.129-165 *āpaddharma* "the dharma in times of distress", 12.168-352 *mokṣadharma*, "the dharma of final release", and 13.1-151 *dānadharma*, "the dharma of giving". The final release is given most space: this section includes a devotional passage called *Nārāyaṇīya* and the teachings of Vyāsa to his son Śuka, as well as the story of Śuka.[756]

[756] As the subject of this study are narratives, I will not go deep to the religious content of the MBh. Here it may be noted that it is an original solution to let Bhīṣma who belongs to the warrior caste give the most profound teachings of spiritual matters in the MBh. It is also worth noting how Yudhiṣṭhira is talked out

Looking first at the *Śāntiparvan*, one sees that the F(II) is present in the beginning and stays constantly in the background until Bhīṣma's teaching is well under way. However, there is quite a lot of quoted dialogue already in the first chapters. In 12.6-37 Kuntī, Arjuna, Bhīma, Nakula, Sahadeva, Draupadī and Vyāsa talk in turn with Yudhiṣṭhira and discuss his state of mind and the duty of a kṣatriya. They present various views of the *dharma* of a king, their respective arguments reflecting their character and position. Nevertheless, they all agree in saying that Yudhiṣṭhira should try to recover from his experiences, soothe his mind and act like a king. These views are contrasted sharply with Yudhiṣṭhira's angry insistence of renunciation of the kingship. This passage paves the way to the teaching of Bhīṣma and the reprise of the dispute about to-be-or-not-to-be-a-king, which comes after the two thematic units of *rājadharma* and *āpaddharma* in 12.166. By then the resistance of Yudhiṣṭhira has softened and the mood of the talking is relaxed. According to Bowles these two passages of disputations form a frame around the first two thematic units.[757]

The first substories (*upākhyānas*) come also before the meeting with Bhīṣma: these are "The account of Ṣoḍaśarāja" and "The story of Suvarṇaṣṭhīvin", told by Kṛṣṇa (12.29-30).[758] When Yudhiṣṭhira and his retinue pass Kurukṣetra and the lakes of Rāma Jāmadagnya (Bhārgava Rāma), again a story of this character is narrated by Kṛṣṇa (12.48-49). This time it deals with his forefathers and the reason for his hatred of kṣatriyas.[759] But as the retinue arrives at Hāstinapura and Yudhiṣṭhira is crowned a king, other voices fall silent, because Vaiśampāyana has much to tell: he describes the city and its residents and the ceremony in detail.

Then Bhīṣma starts the education of Yudhiṣṭhira, and after staying on for a while and giving information of the mood and looks of the speakers like a stage director

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of his urge to abandon his kingdom and become a recluse by sermons about renunciation and detachment from the world. The solution is the way of detached action according to one's dharma, similar to the one advocated in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

[757] Bowles 2009: 121-135.

[758] The first of these is not really a story, although marked as such: it consists of a list of sixteen kings who were virtuous but still had to die. Kṛṣṇa has heard Nārada tell it to king Sṛñjaya who gireved for his son Suvarṇaṣṭhīvin, whose story comes next, and tells it here to console Yudhiṣṭhira.

[759] In addition of the narratives that are marked to be *upākhyānas* in the texts there are small stories inserted everywhere in the dialogue: especially Bhīṣma's sermons are full of similes and parables. Of special interest are the animal fables, such as "The story of three fishes" (12.135) that is found in the *Pañcatantra*, and the story about the alliance of the cat and the mouse (12.136) which is affiliated with the narratives of this later collection. There is also the story of the king Brahmadatta and the bird Pūjanī (12.137), a dialogue of a vulture and a jackal (12.149) and the story of two doves (12.141-145, above). The last-mentioned story resembles the tales of the *Jātakas*. To these must be added is the story of the sage Nārada, the Wind and the kapok tree (12.150-151) which brings into mind the agonistic dialogues between trees and animals in the ancient Middle Eastern literature and the fables of Aesop.

Vaiśampāyana leaves the scene (this happens finally around the chapter 60). Bhīṣma's teaching consists of quoted dialogues and embedded *upākhyānas* which in this book are more unevenly scattered than in the Book 13.[760] The first narratives told by Bhīṣma deal with the relations of brahmans and kṣatriyas. In 12.146 there is a wrinkle in time: Bhīṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhira about the king Janamejaya, the son of Parikṣit, who has accidentally killed a brahman and is given counsel how to wash away this sin by the seer Indrota Śaunaka. At this time Janamejaya, the narratee of the MBh, had not yet been born.

In between the tales, especially in the part that deals with *mokṣa*, Bhīṣma quotes dialogues between various persons, ascetics, seers, gods and demons. The narratives are in this section mostly pious or philosophical. He introduces also by and by the philosophy of non-commitment and the principles of *sāṃkhya*.[761] In 12.224-248 he quotes the teaching that Vyāsa has given to his son Śuka about the study of Veda, *sāṃkhya* and *yoga*, four stages of life[762] and freedom from passion. The story of Śuka, which is quite elaborately composed, is narrated by Bhīṣma in 12.310-320.[763] By the grace of Śiva, Vyāsa conceives a perfect son: while rubbing firesticks, he sees the beautiful apsaras Ghṛtācī who has taken the form of a parrot (*śuka*). Śuka is born from his seed that has spilled to the firesticks.[764] Śuka is blazing brightly as the sun, and right away the Vedas are presented to him and Śiva gives him the sacred thread of the initiated. At once he begins to yearn the final release from endless rebirths. He studies *sāṅkhya* and *yoga* with his father and *dharma* and *mokṣa* with king Janaka.[765] Finally, knowing all and mastering all, he climbs to Mount Kailāsa and attains *mokṣa*. He flies towards the sun, passes through the world of gods indifferent to the beauty of the landscape and nymphs, and becomes one with the universe. When his father follows him and cries after him, the

[760] Hiltebeitel (2005: 487) points out that all the substories in the Book 12 contain either the god Dharma or a character that has the word *dharma* in his name (like the saintly goose Rājadharma in 12:162-165.).
[761] *Sāṃkhya* is a philosophical school (*darśana*), one of the six classical schools of thought in India. It is based on dualistic view of the world. It was founded by Kapila. The school of *yoga*, founded by Patañjali, has much in common with *sāṃkhya*, but *yoga* is interested in getting rid of the plurality and acquiring oneness (with absolute *brahman*) by the discipline and purification of mind and body.
[762] These are the stage of a student (*brahmacārin*), a householder (*gṛhastha*), a wood-dweller (*vanaprastha*) and a hermit (*sannyāsin*). The two first stages are for all, the retirement to the wood in old age is for some and the austere life of a hermit is for the few.
[763] The story of Śuka is discussed thoroughly by Hiltebeitel 2001a: 278-322.
[764] This kind of homozygotic breeding is not shameful but holy: it does not involve an impure physical contact with a female. Ṛṣis and gods spill their seed in many myths and narratives to produce miraculous sons, and seers like Agastya and Vasiṣṭha, the two sons of the god Varuṇa, can themselves be engendered by this all-male way. See Smith 1991.
[765] It is somewhat strange that Śuka goes to a king to learn about *dharma* and *mokṣa*, not to his father, who is told to possess all the wisdom of the world, but Bhīṣma is also a kṣatriya, and Janaka is revered for his patronage of sages and love of wisdom in the *Upaniṣads* (see pp. 145-146 above).

whole universe answers: *bhoḥ*.[766] Vyāsa is pleased and ashamed: his son has achieved *mokṣa*, but he himself has not.

This strange narrative sheds some light on "the Author". On the other hand it presents again a time loop: Śuka is said to sit beside his father in the snake sacrifice of the king Janamejaya. This would not be possible, if he had departed from the world before or during the lifetime of Bhīṣma.

Straight after the story of Śuka follows the *Nārāyaṇīya* (12.321-339) a passage which glorifies Nārāyaṇa, a form of Viṣṇu, as the ultimate god whom one should worship to attain *mokṣa*. Bhīṣma introduces the theme by a narrative that tells about the sage Nārada's encounter with Nārāyaṇa and his vision of this god as the creator and source of everything else.[767] After this the F(II) suddenly surfaces and the embedding of Bhīṣma disappears, and it is Janamejaya who now questions Vaiśaṃpāyana about disengagement and engagement and Nārāyaṇa's role in them. Vaiśaṃpāyana in his turn acts as the guru, refers to his time as a disciple of Vyāsa studying the four Vedas and the *Mahābhārata*, repeats Vyāsa's teachings, tells about the seer Nārada's devotion and philosophizes on Nara and Nārāyaṇa.[768] He also advises Janamejaya to go on with the preparations for a horse sacrifice, and Janamejaya is said to obey.[769]

At the end of the *Nārāyaṇīya* the dialogue of Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma reappears and continues, as if it were the frame around the preceding dialogue of Vaiśaṃpāyana and Janamejaya. Bhīṣma tells a story of a virtuous brahman and a virtuous snake which ends with the brahman taking an *uñccha* vow (living only on the leftovers of of grain and other crops)[770]. With this story the book ends.

The next book, *Anuśāsanaparvan* ("The Book of Instruction") begins with Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma still deep in discussion and Vaiśaṃpāyana and Janamejaya out of stage. The subject is the *dharma* of giving, and the structure and the mood of the text is lighter and looser than in the book 12. This reflects the passing of the dark and passive state of mind of Yudhiṣṭhira and his acceptance of the kingly dharma. Long and rambling

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[766] This shows that Śuka is everywhere, having become one with the *brahman*. *Bhoḥ* is the respectful answer to one's superior.
[767] This narrative contains the embedded story of the sacrifice of the king Vasu Uparicara (see p. 194 n. 646 above) and the dispute of gods and seers about animal offerings.
[768] The passage contains also embedded narratives that Vaiśaṃpāyana quotes. Kṛṣṇa tells myths about Nārāyaṇa's relation to Brahmā and Rudra and the sacrifice of Dakṣa, and Vyāsa tells how Nārāyaṇa appeared to Brahmā in a form with a horse's head. These are on the fourth level, just as Bhīṣma's narratives.
[769] In the middle of the snake sacrifice?
[770] Vyāsa praises this ascetic way of life in "The story of Mudgala" in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* (Book 3).

substories dominate the discussion, and they are told near each other. Earnest and pious narratives rub shoulders with tales that deal with sex and infidelity (13.2., 13.12, 13.19-22, 13.39-43). Cyavana, the son of Bhṛgu (see 2.3.1. and 3.1.1.[771]), is met in 13.50-51. Here Cyavana is practicing ascetism in an extreme way, by living under water. His hair is green and he is covered with weed and shells. Low-caste fishermen find him in their net and tell about him to king Nahuṣa. The king offers a cow to get him free, the fishermen give it to Cyavana and the seer purifies them, so that they will go to heaven. In the next story Cyavana humiliates and tortures king Kuśika and his wife and even forces them to pull his chariot like beasts.[772] When they accept all meekly, Cyavana releases them, builds them a golden palace and gives them a boon: their grandson will be born as a brahman.[773]

After the two Cyavana stories comes the story of the king Nṛga, cursed to live as a lizard trapped in a well until he meets Kṛṣṇa (13.69).[774] It is followed by the story of Naciketas who goes to the realm of death (Yama) when his impatient father Uddālaki kicks him off with "go to Yama", i.e. go to hell (13.70). Like the story of Cyavana, this also is a chip of the Vedic block.[775] In this story as well in many others in the book 13 there is also quite a lot of humour. After telling five more tales Bhīṣma considers Yudhiṣṭhira's education completed. At the end of the book the F(II) returns and Vaiśaṃpāyana describes how the Pāṇḍavas, with a large retinue of seers and other people, say farewell to Bhīṣma who has chosen the day of the winter solstice to die (13.153-154).

The F(II) envelops the books 12 and 13 (12.1-59; 13.153-154) but as told above, it is invisible for most of the time. Again, if we start the counting of narrative levels from the general narrator, Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira (12.60 - 13.152) belong to the quoted world

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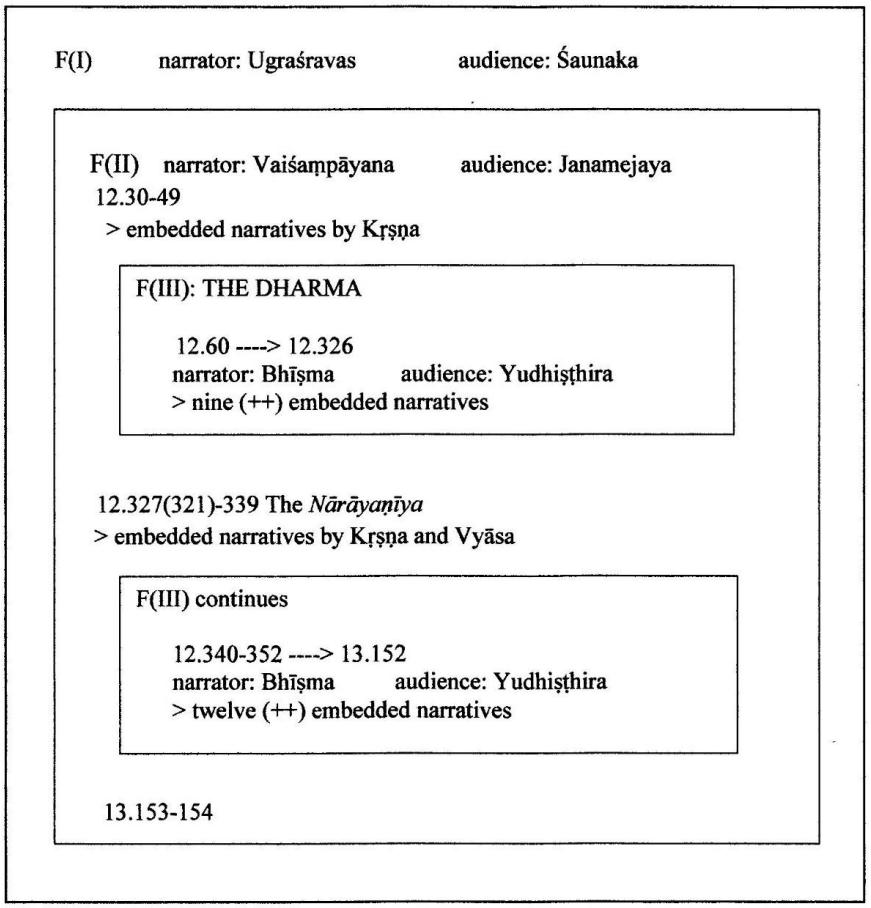
[771] The story of Cyavana's rejuvenation appears in the MBh in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* (3.121.1.-124.10).
[772] The motif of making somebody pull a chariot like a beast is used in the narratives both as a sign of noble humility of the victim, like here (where the perpetrator is a seer and a brahman and the victims are kṣatriyas) but also a sign of extreme pride and egoism of the perpetrator, like in the tale of Nahuṣa and Agastya (in which the perpetrator is a kṣatriya and the victim a seer and a brahman): it is told in the major book 5. See n. 774 below.
[773] The brahman grandson is Viśvāmitra. This again is one of the many tales that tell about Bhārgava Rāma and his family line.
[774] This tale has a parallel in the 1.10-12. where the lizard Ruru is trapped in the reptile form until he meets a man called Ruru (see p. 182). The arrogant king Nahuṣa has similar fate. His story is told in three parts in the MBh. In 5.11-18 gods anoint Nahuṣa as their king, but he grows imperious and starts to covet Indra's wife, after which he is toppled. In 13.102 the king wants the seer Agastya draw his chariot, but Bhṛgu curses him to be a snake. How Yudhiṣṭhira frees him from the curse, is told in 3.174-178.
[775] This motif appears probably for the first time in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, in a story in which Varuṇa sends his son Bhṛgu to the underworld (I.42-44). The source of the MBh story is the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* where the content of the narrative is deeply philosophical in spite of the joke in the beginning. Vājaśravasa says that he is willing to give away all he has. His son Naciketas asks three times: whom will you give me? The father gets angry and says: I will give you to Yama. So the simple Naciketas goes to visit Yama, who is not at home. To compensate for this lack of hospitality, Yama gives the boy three boons. One of them is to teach Naciketas about the nature of man, *ātman* and *mokṣa*.

where Vaiśaṃpāyana is the narrator (the third level). The dialogues, little tales and *upākhyānas* told by almost single-handedly by Bhīṣma form the fourth narrative level. Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa, who tell their stories inside Vaiśaṃpāyana's narrative, are also narrators of the third level, whose narratives take place on the fourth level (see the Diagram 8 below).

The F(II) breaks through the frame of Bhīṣma roughly in the middle, i.e. during the *Nārāyanīya* (12.321-339), in which Vaiśaṃpāyana and Janamejaya are the narrator and the narratee. The passage is not long, but it is highlighted by an announcement by Bhīṣma that his story about Nārāyaṇa and his "White Island" is the essence of all the other narratives that he has told (12. 326). Hiltebeitel is of the opinion that the Critical Edition is in these chapters too critical and the text should include the level of Ugraśravas and Śaunaka who are quoting the dialogue between the narrator and the narratee of the F(II). [776] In this study Occam's razor is used[777] and therefore only the F(II) is shown to be present in this place. The Diagram 9 below illustrates the narrative levels of the books 12 and 13.

[776] Hiltebeitel 2005: 472.
[777] The passage is crucial, but the involvement of F(I) would muddle its message. It is not Śaunaka and his seers, but the king Janamejaya who needs to be taught about *mokṣa* and non-violence, besides Yudhiṣṭhira, because he has shown violent tendencies.

Diagram 9. The frame of Bhīṣma



In the diagram (++) indicates that in the number of embeddings only the "official" *upākhyānas* are taken into account, but there are at least an equal number of smaller stories inserted in the dialogue. "The story of Śuka" in the Book 12 could have been lifted out in the diagram as a special narrative, as it belongs to the biography of "the Author". The numbers of chapters shown with the *Nārāyaṇīya* refer both to the whole section that begins in 12.321, and the part where F(II) is present, which begins in 12.327.

Of the three embedded stories narrated by Kṛṣṇa the first (12.30) is told to answer Yudhiṣṭhira's question and to prove that the death of loved ones must not make one desperate. The next two stories (12.48-49) belong to cycle of tales related to Bhārgava

Rāma and his family. The narratives that Bhīṣma tells are illustrations of his teaching: he either quotes the dispute of some legendary persons on the ethical issue he wants to prove, in the style of the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* (see chapter 2.6. above) or narrates a story for the same purpose. The *Nārāyaṇīya* stands out not only structurally (belonging partly to F(II)) but also for its subject: in the middle of the discussion of *dharma* that is cumulatively backed up by heterogenous examples and applications, it concentrates on a single vision and the path of devotion as the answer to all questions. It functions like the *Bhagavadgītā* in the frame of Saṃjaya.

The sources of the narratives are predominantly Vedic.[778] The background of the dialogues which Bhīṣma quotes is similar. He himself refers to "sayings" and "discourses" of seers and gods that he has listened to, probably when he was staying in heaven with his mother, the goddess Gaṅgā.[779] He has leant martial arts from Rāma Jāmadagnya, and his other teachers include Nārada (the ultimate semi-divine counsellor in many narratives), Vyāsa (a master of Veda, *yoga* and *sāṅkhya*), Asita Devala (the brother of Dhaumya who is the house priest of the Pāṇḍavas, and also an expert of *yoga* and snake-lore) and Mārkaṇḍeya (a mighty seer than appears in the *Āraṇyakaparvan*).[780] These names reveal that Bhīṣma is an eminent authority by the standards of the MBh. The other narrators of the "Dharma" books, Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa, are also such figures that are expected to narrate stories that include serious message. However, in the book 13 there are many narratives which are homely and lighthearted, even though they are attached to ethical teachings. In this respect this book bears resemblance to the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*.

It is to be noted, on one hand, that in spite of the great differences of the two long embeddings of "the War" and "the Dharma" (the first is mostly action and the second mostly talking), the diagrams 8 and 9 that show the underlying structure of these sections resemble each other. In both the embedding can divided into two parts that are interrupted by a switch to the level of F(II). On the other hand, the structure of the *frame* of the "Dharma" books is in many ways similar to the model of "the conversational frame" that was applied to the *Upaniṣads* and *Brāhmaṇas* in the chapter 2.6. The frame around embedded narratives is not a pure narrative but a discussion about theoretical issues such as ritual exegesis, philosophy or ethics. Still the frame and the embedding are

[778] See Feller 2004 for a study of the Vedic narratives and *dharma*, esp. 242-248 and 283-293. For the real and fictional sources of Bhīṣma, see Hiltebeitel 2001b; 2015: 38-42.
[779] The MBh 1.94.
[780] Hiltebeitel 2015: 39.

interrelated and converse also with each other. The narratives are used in the discussion as examples, applications and demonstrations: to prove, clarify and illustrate what one has just said. In the chapters 3.6.3. and 3.7. I will return to this subject.

3.2.4. The levels of F(II): the Āraṇyakaparvan

In his introduction to the English translation of the *Āraṇyakaparvan*[781] ("The Book of the Forest"), the third Major Book of the MBh, J. A. B. van Buitenen says that it "displays in a grand manner of what the Indian epic is capable".[782] This is certainly true. In this book the main narrative, in which the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī are exiled to the forest after the fatal game of dice, moves between episodes of adventures of the protagonists and peaceful wanderings or respites during which tales are told. There are 21 sub-stories (*upākhyānas*), three of which — *Nala*, *Rāma* and *Sāvitrī* — are very long, and as in the books 12 and 13, smaller stories that are not marked as *upākhyānas* are tucked inside the main narrative. There are also many narrators, for the most part seers whom the Pāṇḍavas meet in the forest.[783]

In this *parvan* the narrative level of Vaiśaṃpāyana and Janamejaya (=F(II)) is constantly present. Janamejaya asks questions which prompt Vaiśaṃpāyana begin a new section of a story. Nevertheless there are long speeches by various characters, and during the *upākhyānas* the speakers of F(II) do not interrupt the flow of the narrative. The scenes switch between the forest, where the Pāṇḍavas are wandering, the court of the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, where news of them is heard, and the heaven of Indra where Arjuna stays for five years. The episodes of the main narrative and the embedded narratives are mixed smoothly to form a satisfying whole, and the length and variance of the book corresponds to the period of twelve years of exile that are spent in the forest.

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[781] The book is also called *Vanaparvan*: *Āraṇyakaparvan* is the name that the Critical Edition uses.
[782] van Buitenen 1975: 174.
[783] "The forest" (*araṇya*, *vana*) in ancient India was the opposite pole of the village (*grāma*). It did not mean only a wood but any wild and uninhabited terrain. It was a place full of dangers, the realm of wild beasts and tribes and mythical creatures like *rākṣasas* (man-eating demons). But it was also an abode for peace and solitude into which holy men, pious persons and those who wanted to leave the duties of a householder to the next generation went to meditate and live ascetic life in an idyllic retreat (*āśrama*). The seers of Śaunaka have chosen the Naimiṣa Forest for their marathon ritual.

The book begins when the Pāṇḍavas leave Hāstinapura, where the game of dice has taken place. They go to the Kāmyaka forest and camp by the bank of the river Gangā. There they are given advice by the seer Śaunaka[784] and also by Dhaumya,[785] who is the house priest of Yudhiṣṭhira. Then the scene shifts to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The old king quarrels with his half-brother Vidura, who has opposed the expulsion: then Vidura goes to the Pāṇḍavas. Dhṛtarāṣṭra repents and sends Saṃjaya to bring Vidura back. In the meantime Vyāsa arrives and reprimands Dhṛtarāṣṭra. After him comes a seer called Maitreya, who tells that Pāṇḍavas have performed great deeds, and Vidura arrives to narrate the story of the killing of a demon called Kirmīra (3.12).[786]

Next, Kṛṣṇa arrives to the camp of the Pāṇḍavas and explains why he has not been present in the game of dice: he has killed Śalva, the king of Saubha, who has attacked Kṛṣṇa's people with the aid of his city which moves through the air like a sci-fi aircraft ("The story of Saubha", 3.15-23). Arjuna leaves the others in the forest and travels north, ultimately reaching the heaven of his father Indra.[787] Bhīma accuses Yudhiṣṭhira of their exile[788] and says they must go back and fight. Then a seer called Bṛhadaśva arrives and tells "The story of Nala" (3.50-78) to Yudhiṣṭhira. This charming romance is famous on its own, but remarkable also because it presents a parallel for the main plot: therefore it is necessary to give a summary of it.[789]

Nala, the king of the Niṣādhas, and Damayantī, the daughter of the king of Vidarbha, hear of each other and fall in love from afar. Nala wins Damayantī when her father arranges a *svayamvara*, a ritual of "the choosing of a husband"[790]. They live happily

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[784] This may be the same Śaunaka as the one in F(I) or some other seer.

[785] In the *Pauṣyopaparvan* (minor book 3) there is Dhaumya Āyoda, the guru who gives his students difficult tasks (see p. 180). Probably not the same person.

[786] For this frenetic traffic in the court of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, see p. 252.

[787] During his journey Arjuna fights with a wild mountain man (*kirāta*), who is the god Śiva in disguise. He stays for five years in the heaven of Indra, learns music and dancing and receives arms from his divine father.

[788] Throughout the Books 3 and 4 Bhīma and Draupadī complain about the passiveness of Yudhiṣṭhira. The criticism is especially hard in the Book 4, when Yudhiṣṭhira does not defend Draupadī from the violent behavior of Kīcaka.

[789] *Nala* has attracted much scholarly interest (see esp. Biardeau 1985, Shulman 1994, Hiltebeitel 2001a). It has been studied mostly in the context of its relation to its frame, even though it is probable that it has existed as an independent story. See p. 237.

[790] *Svayaṃvara* (""self-choice") features often in narratives but it is not certain whether it has been practiced in old kingdoms. In stories it is confined to aristocracy. It has two forms. One involves some kind of a contest, usually in martial arts, between the suitors of a royal lady. Arjuna wins Draupadī and Rāma wins Sītā (in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) in a *svayaṃvara* in a contest of archery. This type is probably based on reality. In the other type the woman chooses herself: this is the case in the story of Nala and also in the story of Sāvitrī. Although four gods, Indra, Varuṇa, Agni and Yama attend after taking Nala's form, Damayantī is able to choose the real Nala (just like Sukanyā can distinguish between Cyavana and the Aśvins in the MBh version of the Cyavana story, see p. 217). In *Nala* the four gods soften and signify that

for twelve years and have twins. But the demon Kali,[791] who with his brother Dvāpara had arrived too late to the *svayamvara*, thirsts for revenge. He finds his opportunity when Nala makes a mistake and loses his ritual purity for a moment. Then Kali can enter Nala and strike him with madness: at the same time he tells his brother Dvāpara to enter the dice so that they will beat Nala. Urged by Kali, Nala's brother invites him into a game of dice. Nala, being crazed and "sick" (*ātura*), loses his kingdom and his wealth. He leaves his city without any possessions. Damayantī insists following him into wilderness, and they have nothing but one piece of cloth which they divide. Then Nala, still mad and wild, leaves Damayantī. She has adventures of her own until she gets back to his father and the court of Vidarbha. She has sent their children there already during Nala's gambling.

Nala wanders on alone, sees a forest fire and hears somebody calling for help. He rescues the snake king Karkoṭaka[792], who then bites him. The bite changes the handsome Nala into a deformed dwarf, but the snake explains that this is for good. Nala must be disguised to win back his wife, and the poison from the bite will eventually drive Kali out. The snake gives Nala a garment that will change him back into his own shape, and adopting the name Bāhuka Nala gets work as a cook[793] in the service of the king Ṛtuparṇa.[794] Damayantī hears rumours that Nala is alive, and she asks her father to arrange a second *svayaṃvara* to persuade her husband to come out of hiding.

Ṛtuparṇa wants to woo her and after seeing how skillful Bāhuka is with horses[795], makes him his charioteer. The king is an expert gambler, and in the way to the *svayaṃvara* Nala learns this art by bestowing his skill with horses on the king in return. When Nala learns "the heart of dice", Kali leaves his body for good: he is again himself inside, only his outer shape is different. When they arrive at Vidarbha, there is no *svayaṃvara*, which puzzles Ṛtuparṇa. But Damayantī sends his servant girl to spy on Bāhuka, who proves to possess the same qualities as Nala.[796] When Damayantī tastes

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they are gods, so that Damayantī can pick out the sweating and blinking Nala from the row. The gods also give Nala boons. In the story of Sāvitrī the eponymous heroine is even more active: she drives in a chariot in the countryside looking for the right husband.

[791] Kali is lowest throw in the game of dices. Dvāpara is the second lowest. Both are also names of the third and fourth of cosmic ages (*yuga*). *Kṛtayuga* is the first and best, golden age, followed by *Tretayuga*.

[792] The god Agni had given Nala a boon in his wedding which enabled him to go through fire unharmed.

[793] The mastery of cooking was a wedding gift from the god Yama.

[794] It is said Ṛtuparṇa comes from a family of *asuras* (demons). So his skill with dice may have a demonic origin.

[795] In the beginning of the narrative, in the description of Nala, it is said that he is "skilled with horses" (*aśvakovida*).

[796] This "second courting" during which Damayantī identifies and calls back Nala, is done with a series of riddles that go between the couple. They are very interesting but cannot be discussed here.

food that Bāhuka has prepared, she is certain that Bāhuka is Nala. Bāhuka is invited to Damayantī and her father, and after being assured that his wife has not deserted him and the *svayaṃvara* was only a ploy to invite him back, he explains that he lost his kingdom because he was possessed by Kali. Now he is himself again. Then he resumes his own form.[797] There is a happy reunion, and after a month Nala goes back to his own kingdom and wins it back with a single throw of dice.

This is a mirror narrative, a miniature copy of the main narrative.[798] It is thematically important (see pp. 236-238). Before leaving the Pāṇḍavas, Bṛhadaśva, like Ṛtuparṇa in the tale, bestows on Yudhiṣṭhira the skill of gambling. Now the seer Nārada arrives to tell that Bhīṣma has gone on a pilgrimage on the advice of the seer Pulastya.[799] Yudhiṣṭhira should do the same. Dhaumya presents to Yudhiṣṭhira his favourite itinerary for pilgrimage. Then they meet the seer Lomaśa, who has been sent by Indra and Arjuna to accompany and protect Yudhiṣṭhira on his way. They go first to the Naimiṣa Forest and then to Prayāga.

Nine tales are told during the pilgrimage. In all but one the narrator is Lomaṣa. There is a string of tales about the seer Agastya (3:94-108) who has a Gargantuan appetite and eats and digests everything. His marriage to Lopamudrā is mentioned already in the *Ṛgveda*.[800] "The story of Ṛśyaśṛṅga" ("Deer-horn", 3.110-113)[801] is also remarkable.

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[797] It has been noted that Nala goes through a series of phases of "different selves": first he loses his inner self (the possession of Kali), then he gets a part of it back but changes his outer self (the venom of Karkoṭaka), after this he gets his original inner self back completely (the gift of skill with dice) and finally the outer self also (the meeting with Damayantī).

[798] Discussing this kind of embedding I prefer to use the word "mirroring" and not the term *mise en abyme* ("putting into an abyss") which is connected with modern Western literature. Both refer to a plot or narrative pattern (or image etc.) which exists simultaneously on two hierarchically different levels. The play that Hamlet directs in "Hamlet" is a mirroring / mise en abyme, as it follows the plot of the murder of his father.

[799] Here a list is given of the *tīrthas* (places of pilgrimage) that Pulastya recommends: they start from Puṣkara and end to Prayāga. Both are still famous places of pilgrimage.

[800] The *Ṛgveda* I.179. See p. 82-83. The MBh gives "the full story" of the relationship of Agastya and Lopamudrā. Like Jaratkāru in the minor book 5, Agastya is pressured to marry by his ancestors who are hanging heads down in a cave. Like Pygmalion, he fashions himself a model of a perfect woman and lends him to a king to be brought up like a princess. After marrying her Agastya throws away her fineries and wants her to live in the forest. Only when Lopamudrā has proved herself to be his equal in ascetic practices, he is willing to go to bed with her. But now Lopamudrā declines. She wants Agastya to give her back everything she had as a princess. To get rich quickly Agastya has to conquer the demon Vātāpi who owns a fortune. He tricks the demon with his gargantuan appetite and ability to swallow anything. About the history of the couple, see Patton 2016 (1996). - In another tale Agastya helps the gods by drinking all the water in the ocean to reveal the demons that are hiding in it.

[801] This story was first commented on by Lüders (1940(1897)) who sought to find its original form. He and many scholars after him have seen the horned seer as the model of the unicorn of the mediaeval European legends (see van Buitenen 1975: 188-191). In the Indian version the horned man is a virgin and the lady who comes to hold him in his lap is not, the western version the woman is the virgin. The gift of the unicorn-man to bring rain is not included in the European tale.

Ṛśyaśṛṅga, who has one horn of a deer on his forehead, has never seen anybody but his father. The king of Aṅga is told that only the arrival of the boy would bring rain to his country. The king hires a young courtesan who succeeds making the innocent young man fall in love and follow her to the town.[802].

There is also yet another story about Bhārgava Rāma (3.115-117), told by an ascetic called Akṛtavraṇa, and "The story of Sukanyā" (3.122-125), which is a rather ingenious version of the Cyavana story of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* met in 2.3.2. In this version Sukanyā finds Cyavana inside an anthill[803], pokes his eyes and makes him angry. After a nasty curse[804] her father Śaryāti (!) begs for mercy, and Cyavana promises to withdraw the curse if he can may marry Sukanyā. One day the Aśvins see Sukanyā and ask her to come with them, but she refuses. They promise to make her husband young, after which she can choose between them. They all bath in a lake and when they rise up, they look similar. All the same Sukanyā is able to pick out her husband. Cyavana is so happy that he gives the Aśvins the right to drink *soma*. Then Cyavana performs a sacrifice for Śaryāti and draws a cup of *soma* for the Aśvins. Indra tries to prevent this by striking Cyavana with his *vajra*. Cyavana paralyses his hand and conjures up a demon called Intoxication to attack him. When Indra admits defeat, Cyavana pulls Intoxication away and puts it into women, liquor, gambling and hunting.[805]

Lomaśa tells also the stories of Mādhātar and Jantu (3.126: 3.127-128)[806]; the story of the hawk and the dove (3.130-131), in which the gods Indra and Agni want to test the compassion of the good king Śibi[807]; the story of Aṣṭāvakra (3.132-134) about a disabled brahmin boy who is able to revive his dead father by beating a *sūta* in verbal skills; and finally the story of Yavakrīta (3.135-139), in which the envious nature of the

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[802] The description of the first visit of the courtesan and the innocent report which Ṛśyaśṛṅga gives of it to his father are exceptionally sensual and humorous. The encounter between a wild man and a courtesan who lures him from nature to civilization is met also in the Mesopotamian myth of Enkidu and Shamhat: for this, see Dalley 1991: 53-59 (Tablet I) and 59-60 (Tablet II).

[803] In the MBh Cyavana practices asceticism in extreme ways. Here he has settled inside an anthill, in 13.50. (see p. 222) he stays under water for so long that he is covered by seamoss.

[804] Cyavana blocks the bowels and bladders of Śaryati's men.

[805] Many of the elements of the narrative in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* are there, but the sacrifice of the gods and the episode of the Aśvins and the horse's head given to Dadhyañc are missing. Indra is present in Cyavana's sacrifice to prevent the Aśvins to partake the *soma*, but nobody is beheaded, and Cyavana proves mightier than Indra. Here again the diminishing status of the gods and especially Indra can be observed. - The demon of Intoxication is borrowed from another narrative in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (III.159-61).

[806] Both are sons of kings. The story of Jantu is more interesting: his father kills him in a sacrifice to beget a hundred sons. This motif appears also in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa (2.3.3.)

[807] The story of the king Śibi is narrated also in the *Sivijātaka* (no. 499). Meisig 1995 traces the travels of this story. Besides tales that are shared with the *Pañcatantra*, many narratives of the MBh have similar motifs as the *Jātakas*. For a discussion of these see Söhnen-Thieme 2009.

son of Bharadvāja[808] causes murder and mayhem. Here also the dead are revived to secure a happy end.[809]

The Pāṇḍavas leave Lomaśa and continue their the pilgimage. They meet Hanuman the monkey, the half-brother of Bhīma,[810] who has grown old and tired. The story of Rāma, which will come in full near the end of this book, is invoked. Then the retinue travels to the mount Śveta to meet Arjuna. There they are attacked by *rākṣasas* (demons) and *yakṣas* (wood spirits). The fighting ends when their leader Kubera learns to respect the Pāṇḍavas. Arjuna arrives, with celestial weapons given by Indra, and tells how he battled various demons at Indra's request (3.163-172). The Pāṇḍavas spend many years in the forest. Once a giant snake captures Bhīma and nearly kills him. Yudhiṣṭhira arrives in time and is able to answer the question[811] of the snake. The snake proves to be king Nahuṣa, cursed to be a snake until he meets Yudhiṣṭhira.[812]

For the rainy season the Pāṇḍavas return the Kāmyaka Forest. There they receive visitors, Kṛṣṇa, his wife Satyabhāmā, and the seer Mārkaṇḍeya, who is the next storyteller. After initial questions the seer starts to tell tales, e.g. the story of Atri (3.183) and the story of the Fish (3.185), which is essentially the same as the story of the Flood in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (see pp. 95-96).[813] Then follows a description of the four ages (*yuga*) which Mārkaṇḍeya has witnessed. The last age Kaliyuga ends into violent chaos (*pralaya*), then all will begin again with the first age. In the middle of the *pralaya* Mārkaṇḍeya has found Kṛṣṇa, and entering his mouth he saw there the whole world.[814] Kṛṣṇa is revered as the greatest of gods. Next the seer tells a story of a frog princess (3.190) with whom king Parikṣit[815] falls in love. Then come the stories of Indradyumna (3.191), the Indian Methusalah, and the demon-killer Dhundhumāra (3.192-195). After a double story of a *parivratā*, a faithful wife, and the brahman and the hunter (3.196-206)

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[808] In the MBh Bharadvāja is told to be the father of two sons: the other is Droṇa. In the narrative of Droṇa Yavakrīta does not appear and vice versa, so these are two different storylines. Brodbeck believes that the story of Yavakrīta is the older one. See Brodbeck 2005: 146-150.
[809] Of these five stories four tell about sons and fathers and also about resurrection. The story of Jamadagni and his son Bhārgava Rāma shares also these motifs.
[810] Both are sons of Vāyu, the god of wind.
[811] In the course of the MBh Yudhiṣṭhira confronts several choices like this (the yakṣa in the pool, the dog in the heaven's gate) which measure his wits and his moral. They are naturally connected to his "education" but the "testing the hero" is also a common motif in folktales (see e.g. Thompson index of motifs H1150-H1569 (Tests of character)).
[812] See p. 222 n. 774.
[813] The fish reveals in the end that he is the god Brahmā.
[814] This is one of the many epiphanies of Kṛṣṇa/Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa in the MBh.
[815] Not that Parikṣit who is Janamejaya's father. This king has three sons called Śala, Dala and Bala.

Mārkaṇḍeya ends the storytelling with a cycle of mythical tales about the god Agni and sage Aṅgiras[816], and the birth of Skanda (3.207-221), but stays with the Pāṇḍavas.

Then the scene changes: Vaiśaṃpāyana tells what happens in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court. Under the pretext of going to count the cattle, Duryodhana, his brothers and Karṇa go to the forest to spy the Pāṇḍavas. They get into a skirmish with gandharvas and their king Citrasena conquers them with his magic weapons. Duryodhana is taken prisoner and the other Kauravas flee to the Pāṇḍavas. The Pāṇḍavas ride out to fight with the gandharvas, Arjuna with his divine weapons. After Citrasena is overpowered, he and Arjuna find out that they are old friends.[817] Duryodhana is set free, and he is so ashamed that he wants to fast to death. His allies make him change his mind.

The exile is almost over. Vyāsa comes to the Kāmyaka Forest and tells the story of Mudgala, who was generous for others but lived himself only by rice he gleaned (3.246-247). Then king Jayadratha of Sindhu passes by, is smitten with Draupadī and takes her off in his chariot. The Pāṇḍavas pursue, attack the king and his army and kill most of them. Draupadī is rescued and Bhīma beats up Jayadratha. Back in the hermitage, Yudhiṣṭhira feels again that he is the unhappiest man in the world, having now nearly lost his wife in the odious forest. To lighten his spirits Mārkaṇḍeya tells "The story of Rāma" (3.257.-276.),[818] another mirror narrative. Its thematic and chronological relation to the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been frequently discussed.[819] The MBh version concentrates on the abduction of Sītā, but the main points of the plot are roughly the same, except for the beginning and the end: there is no frame with Vālmīki the poet, and the story ends happily in the reunion of Rāma and Sītā.[820]

Straight after Mārkaṇḍeya tells another long tale, "Sāvitrī" (3.277-283). This is the story of a devoted wife who is bold, clever and persistent. She follows Yama, who is carrying off the soul of his husband, to the realm of the dead, talks and talks until the terrible god is won over by her cleverness, and brings the husband back to life.[821] The

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[816] These tales are firmly rooted in the Vedic narratives. See Feller 2004: 49-126, esp. 83-84.
[817] In 3.45 it is told that Citrasena teaches Arjuna music and dancing in the heaven of Indra.
[818] This is Rāma son of Daśaratha, the prince of Āyodhya.
[819] The prevailing opinion is that the MBh has taken the story from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Brockington (1978) provides ample evidence for this view. However, Biardeau and Hiltebeitel believe in the priority of the MBh version on the ground that it is an essential part of the *Āraṇyakaparvan*. Also van Buitenen shares this opinion. See Hiltebeitel 2005: 503-504 and 2009. The plot of the *Rāmāyaṇa* will be summarized in the chapter 3.5.1. below.
[820] It would have been psychologically unwise to tell a version in which Rāma sends Sītā away when Draupadī is shaken by the kidnapping and Yudhiṣṭhira is having one of his fits of depression.
[821] This narrative combines several motifs. The main motif is one is the meeting with the Death, or a visit to the netherworld, in order to bring back a dead spouse. It is present e.g. in the Mesopotamian myth of

next story is narrated within F(II): in the middle of telling how Indra goes to Karṇa to get the earrings and the armour he had when he was born, Vaiśaṃpayana narrates the story of Karṇa (3.287-293).[822] The book ends in an episode that resembles a folk tale (3.295-298). The Pāṇḍavas are lost in the forest and search for water, and one by one they come to a pool, where a crane speaks and wants them to answer his questions. When they ignore the crane, they fall down dead. Finally Yudhiṣṭhira comes and sees his brothers dead. When he enters the water to drink, the crane changes into one-eyed yakṣa. Yudhiṣṭhira can give the correct answers to his questions. The yakṣa gives him a boon: he may revive one of his brothers. Yudhiṣṭhira chooses Nakula,[823]. Then the yakṣa brings all the brothers back to life and reveals his true form. He is Dharma, the father of Yudhiṣṭhira, who has tested his son.

After this near-fatal encounter the Pāṇḍavas leave their forest hermitage: twelve years have passed and and they prepare to spend the next year in disguise.[824]

As seen in the description above, the *Āraṇyakaparvan* is a veritable mesh of stories and motifs. Apart from many intratextual threads that bind it especially to the narratives of the "Dharma" books, it throws scores of intertextual tentacles across Indian literature and mythology. Also the structure of the book is special, even for the MBh. The embedded narratives are scattered all over the book and narrated by eight narrators in all. There are fewer narratees: only one narrative is told to someone else than the Pāṇḍavas. The narratee of "Nala" is mainly Yudhiṣṭhira, for the tale has a special meaning for him, but his brothers (except Arjuna) and Draupadī are present in the narrative situation. In addition to embedded narratives, many of the episodes of the main narrative have a form of a separate narrative. Thus e.g. the episodes of "The fight with the mountain man" (3.39-41), "The giant snake" (3.173-178), "The story of Karṇa" and the story about the yakṣa in the pond (3.295-298) look like separate tales even though they belong to the main narrative and are told by Vaiśaṃpāyana, the primary narrator of F(II).

The first two embedded narratives, told by character-narrators Kṛṣṇa and Vidura, take place in the same narrated world as their narrators inhabit, whereas the other

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Dumuzi and Inanna (see Dalley 1991: 154-162) . Here it is connected with the theme of *pativratā*, the faithful wife. See Parpola 1998.

[822] This story reveals that Kuntī, before marrying Pāṇḍu, gave birth to a son of the god Sūrya, placed him in a basket and put him in a river. The *sūta* Adhiratha and his wife found him and adopted him, and he grew up as a golden-skinned warrior. It is to be noted that because the narrator here is Vaiśaṃpāyana in the F(II), the Pāṇḍavas do not learn that Karṇa is their brother until he is dead.

[823] So that he would not favour the son of his own mother.

[824] They will next go to the court of Virāta, but this information is given in next *parvan*.

narratives happen in a different world and in an earlier age. The boundary between the "real" and "imagined" worlds is blurred by the fact that the characters and happenings inside the F(II), even though they represent "now" and "here", are fantastic — they include magical curses, ageless seers and otherworldly creatures such as Takṣaka and Vāsuki. The level of the secondary quoted world is even more mythical. The protagonists are sons of gods, Kṛṣṇa is a god, and the descriptions of his adventures (3.15-23) or those of Arjuna (3.38-45, 160-171) contain predominantly supernatural elements and events.[825] Like in the Vedic narratives, the metalepses can lose their shock value, when all the storyworlds are full of non-real creatures and happenings.

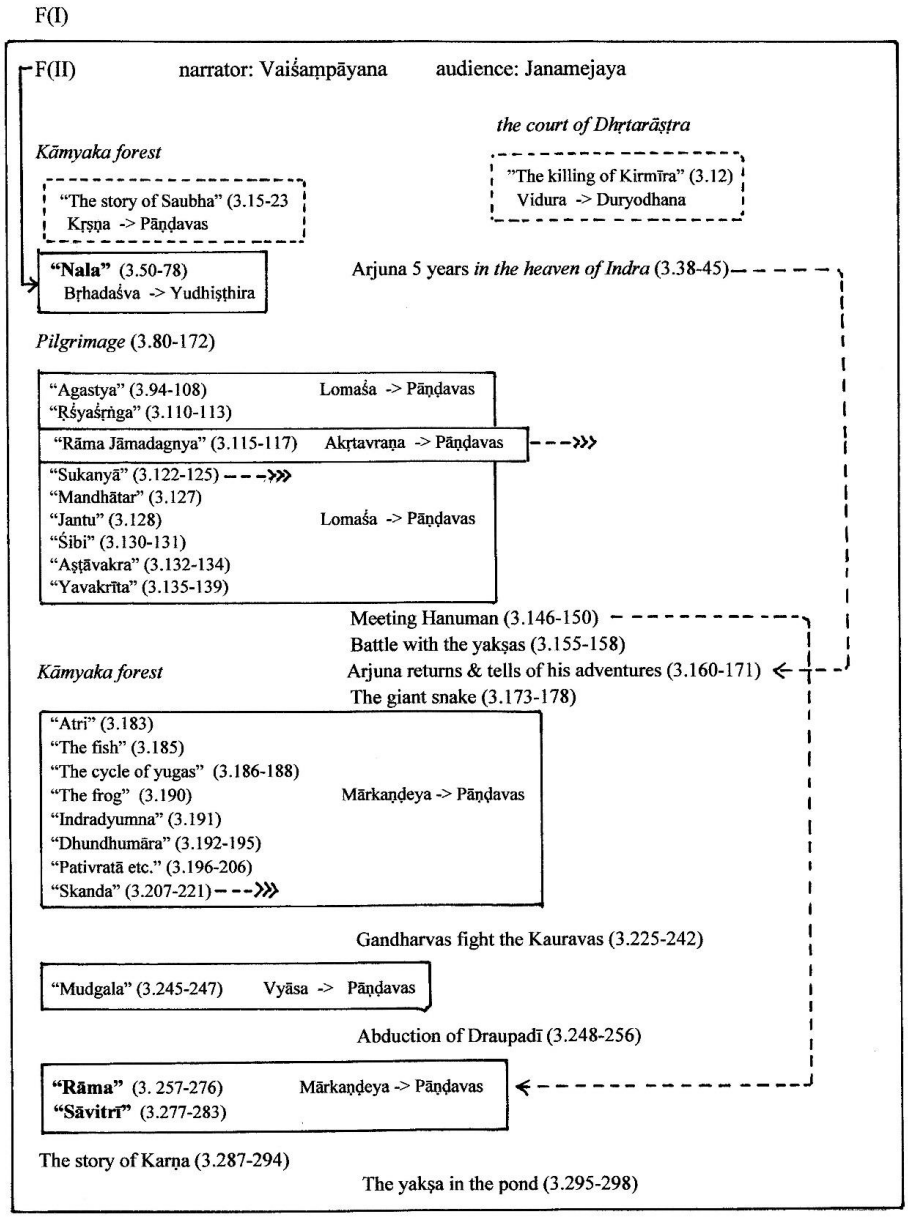
The sequence of the events of the main narrative can be compared to the frame of Saṃjaya (Diagram 8). In it there is a section containing a pilgrimage that interrupts the main narrative. It is told as a flashback, whereas the pilgrimage in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* is a part of the main narrative. Even so, it represents an interlude between the two blocks of narratives that are told in the Kāmyaka Forest.

The structure of the *Āraṇyakaparvan* is presented below in the Diagram 10.[826] A dotted line with an arrow (- - - ->) indicates a thematic connection. A dotted line with three arrows (- - - >>>) indicates that the same story or motif appears elsewhere in the MBh. The boxes with the embedded stories are on the left (except "the story of Kirmīra"), the episodes of the main narrative (F(II)) are in the right.

In spite of the abundance of embedded narratives and narrators the levels of narration are easy to distinguish. The narrative of Vaiśaṃpāyana F(II) represents the third level. The narrative of Ugraśravas represents the second level and the narrative of the general narrator the first (in the diagram they are both contained by the F(I)). The embedded stories of F(II) with a character-narrator telling a story that takes place in the fourth level are put inside boxes, and the relation between the narrator and the narratee/audience is indicated by an arrow (->). The two first embedded narratives are told by a character-narrator and take place on the fourth narrative level, but as said above, they tell about happenings that take place in the narrated world of the F(II) and are diegetic, unlike the other embedded stories. Therefore the contours of the boxes are drawn with a dotted line. The differences in the involvement of the different narrators will be discussed in the chapter 3.3.1.

[825] More about the narrative worlds in 3.3.3.
[826] See Mangels 1994: 92-94.

Diagram 10. The *Āraṇyakaparvan*



Almost all the narratives in this book take place on the fourth level. This sounds complicated, but the absence of the first level (F(I)) keeps the narration simple. There is Vaiśaṃpāyana who tells how Lomaśa or Mārkaṇḍeya tells a story. Most of the time the

F(II) is also left aside, as the narratee Janamejaya does not interrupt the narration. Vaiśaṃpāyana with a question (and evoke the F(II)) more than six times[827] in the whole book. Both the three long narratives and shorter stories that the two seers narrate proceed smoothly without pauses. Yudhiṣṭhira makes questions only between the narratives.

All of the embedded stories and episodes are worth a special treatment, but here I can only touch them lightly. There is a special connection between *Nala* and the main narrative. It is not straightforward. The plots have many similarities, but also differences. Historically *Nala* may well have been an independent oral romance; the episodes of dice-playing and forest-dwelling are not as dramatic and important in it as in they are in the main narrative[828], the end is different and the heroine Damayantī has such a prominent parallel narrative.[829] Even the motif of a king's exile may have come from somewhere else than the main narrative of the MBh, as it is shared by other contemporary stories,[830] e.g. by the main narrative of Rāma, and many details (such as the choice between similar-looking husbands) are familiar from the brāhmaṇic sources.

However, if we look at the narrative in its context,[831] it could be regarded as an optional storyline, and the differences serve to highlight the parts that are wrong in "the narrative of Yudhiṣṭhira".[832] Nala never gambles away his wife or children: in spite of

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[827] 3.1; 3.39: 3.47; 3.157: 3.175; 3.284-294. The chapters 3.284-294 contain the story of Karṇa which Vaiśaṃpāyana tells to Janamejaya.

[828] It is significant that the blind passion for dice-playing is not Nala's natural trait but a result of the malevolent magic of Kali. In reality Nala is without faults. Yudhiṣṭhira, on the contrary, has many weak points. In addition to being possessed with dice, he is also prone to moodiness, passivity and hesitation.

[829] Because of this and other features (the femininity of Nala and the gentle and courtly tone of the story) van Buitenen believes that *Nala* has originally been a women's narrative (a narrative told to among women and for women) (van Buitenen 1975: 183-185). *Sāvitrī* has an active female heroine, a passive "hero" (whose sole purpose is to be saved by his wife) and similarly domestic atmosphere, so it too may have originated from the oral tradition carried by women. But as they now exist they fit quite well in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* which has both "masculine" fighting episodes and quiet and "feminine" periods of leisurely storytelling in the Kāmyaka hermitage and in the places of pilgrimage.

[830] Most commentators have stressed that *Nala* is essentially a love story. Its scenes beckon towards the classical *kāvya* literature, in which the poignant sentiments of *viraha* (separation of the lovers) were cultivated. The section in which crazed Nala wanders in the forest resembles most of all the forest scene in the classical drama *Vikramorvaśīyam* of Kālidāsa (4th century CE), in which the king who has lost his wife goes about in the wood mad with sorrow.

[831] This is naturally the position of the synthetic school. Hiltebeitel in his study of the MBh devotes a whole chapter to *Nala* (2001a: 215-239).

[832] It is probable that the composers of the MBh in their telling emphasized and also added details that connect Nala to the main narrative of the MBh. The duo of Kali and Dvāpara can be compared with Duryodhana and Śakuni who connive to make Yudhiṣṭhira lose in a game of dices. There is also the period in which the lovers are disguised like the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadī in their thirteenth year of exile. Nala becomes the deformed Bāhuka and Damayantī a servant girl before they separately find their way back to the normal world and to each other. However, Nala has episodes and motifs that the MBh does not have, like the exchange of riddles and the use of animals as messengers. These are features of courtly literature.

being possessed by Kali, he is able to stop gambling after he has lost his kingdom.[833] In the main narrative Yudhiṣṭhira's blind selfish folly seems to be at the bottom of the bitterness of Draupadī towards him.[834] Another significant point: unlike the Pāṇḍavas, Nala is not violent. He is never shown to attack anybody. On the contrary, he changes his fate by an act of mercy: he saves the snake Karkoṭaka from flames in a forest fire, and the snake in turn helps him. Nala's action is the exact opposite of what happens both in the main narrative and in the F(II). Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa burn down the Khāṇḍava Forest to kill the snakes that live there, most of all Takṣaka, and Arjuna's great-grandson Janamejaya wants to kill all the snakes in the world by throwing them into fire.

Later on, Nala does not need to fight to have his kingdom back. It is enough that he beats his brother Puṣkara in the game of dices in which he has lost before. How is this possible? Earlier in the tale Puṣkara is shown to be malicious. After Nala has lost his fortune, Puṣkara orders that anybody who helps the ex-king will be put to death. He also expresses his desire to possess Damayantī, in the same way that the Kauravas want to possess Draupadī, and this is the only occasion when the gentle Nala boils with rage. Puṣkara has reason for fear, when Nala comes back and wins the game.

But Nala forgives his brother and gives him gold. This gracious gesture wins Puṣkara over. He reveres and praises Nala and leaves happy and content. His turn of mind may seem unexpected or unreal, but it is ultimately explained by the mercy, humility and generosity that Nala shows throughout the tale. Nala is not tainted by the violence of the kṣatriyas, and therefore his story is a happy story.

Yudhiṣṭhira does not have this alternative. His homecoming and victory are bloody and bitter, and it is natural that he is chronically depressed: for him there is no "happily ever after". The fault is partly his own: he has weaknesses, and this is why he needs to be educated by Bhīṣma. But the violence and tragedy in his story is also predestined. Duryodhana will not soften like Puṣkara although he has many opportunities, because he is not an ordinary person but a devil incarnate, just as Yudhiṣṭhira is the son of the god Dharma. They have to wage the eternal war of the gods and demons. But the example of the subtale of Nala is left to resonate, and by the end of his life Yudhiṣṭhira proves to be a second Nala.

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[833] See Hiltebeitel 2001a: 219. Indeed, Yudhiṣṭhira gambles because he addicted to dice-playing. He acts like a man possessed but there are no demons or other excuses behind his lack of self-restraint. For a partial vindication of Yudhiṣṭhira, see M. Brockington 2009.

[834] It has been noted by Hiltebeitel (2001a: 216-219) that *Nala* is told not only to Yudhiṣṭhira but Draupadī, and the story touches the tension in their relationship.

The other long narratives, *Rāma* and *Sāvitrī*, are connected to their immediate context. The abduction of Draupadī is parallel to the abduction of Rāma's wife Sītā. Draupadī is rescued, just like Sītā, although she does not need to prove by tests that she has remained chaste. The integrity of Sāvitrī reflects the character of Draupadī, who is the only female in the MBh that has mental stature and presence that matches the male protagonists. This tale, however, is not as clear as a mirror as *Nala* and *Rāma*. There are hints for many narratees. *Sāvitrī* may comfort Draupadī after her ordeal, prove to her what women are capable of, and the tale of a faithful wife who is adamant enough to get her husband back from death acts also as a reassurance to Yudhiṣṭhira of his wife's fidelity (it is narrated straight after a version of the tale of Rāma in which Sītā's chastity is self-evident).[835]

Rāma is also narrated to both Draupadī and Yudhiṣṭhira. In the MBh (as also in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) it can be read as Sītā's narrative, even though "the ideal king and hero who is also the God" has traditionally been the centre of the attention and devotion. The message to the husband is to demonstrate that he will overcome his enemies by being as brave, persistent and resourceful as these heroes. Yudhiṣṭhira is an unlikely hero: he needs consolation many times. In the end of the book, thinking of their ordeal and ashamed of hiding from his enemies, he was "so oppressed by sorrow and grief that he choked with tears and fainted."[836] When he is revived, Dhaumya reassures him by telling about the occasions where the gods themselves needed to hide to be able to conquer.

Some of the embedded narratives, such as "Śibi", "Aṣṭāvakra", "Yavakrīta" and "Mudgala", bring up various aspects of *dharma* and pave the way for the teaching of Bhīṣma in the major books 12 and 13. Others seem to be narrated only for entertainment. The stories that Lomaśa tells (3.94-139) are connected to the places that are visited on the pilgrimage, but some of them have thematic bonds with the main narrative. Before the stories about Agastya (3.94-108) Yudhiṣṭhira asks why he has to suffer as his wicked enemies thrive. Lomaśa answers that wicked demons may thrive for a while but the gods will conquer them before long.[837] The first story about Agastya illustrates this fact. The story cycle about fathers, sons and resurrections (3.126-139) seems meaningful, as it

[835] The relation of Draupadī to her five husbands is complex and brings dramatic tension to the plot. Arjuna is her favourite but often away, Bhīma is unflinchingly loyal and her champion. Bhīma's mode of strong emotions and "straight action" is often contrasted with the hesitation and pacifism of Yudhiṣṭhira, who is a source of disappointments for his wife.
[836] 3.299.8. Translation by van Buitenen.
[837] This idea may be related to the message given in the end of the MBh: bad persons are shown heaven before they go to hell, and good persons are shown hell before they go to heaven (see p. 183).

forms some kind of a whole and can be connected thematically to the brāhmaṇic story of Śunaḥśepa (see 2.3.2), but here neither the narrator nor the context reveals any other reason for their insertion than to pass time agreeably by telling new versions of old stories.[838]

The legend of Rāma, son of Jamadagni, is told many times in the MBh. It underlines the themes of violence and revenge of the main narrative. In the *Āraṇyakaparvan* the embedded story picks up two motifs of his life, the beheading of his mother and his vendetta with the king Kārtavīrya.[839] Similarly, the myth of the birth of Skanda (Kārttikeya) is repeated in other parts of the MBh. The glorification of Kṛṣṇa / Nārāyaṇa is less prominent than in later books, whereas the gods Indra and Śiva play significant roles.

3.3. The narrators and the boundaries

The following chapters deal first of all with the narrators and narratees that appear in the MBh (3.3.1). They have been discussed already to some measure, but now this is done more thoroughly in connection with the narrative situation, which is brought emphatically into the foreground in the MBh. These concepts are so important for the central ideas of this study and so tightly interwoven that they had to be discussed side by side all the way. That makes this chapter quite long.

"The Author" Vyāsa will be tackled separately (3.3.2.) The last chapter (3.3.3.) addresses the problem of the boundaries of the text and its definition and image of itself. Here also the question of narrative time is taken up. It can be asked what is the effect of various prolepses and metalepses to the structure, and whether the breaks of the chronological continuity, shifts between levels and distortions of logical order are done some particular purpose in mind, or are they simply errors that have escaped the notice of the composers, because the text is so massive and complicated, or have the questions

[838] There are of course many pairs of fathers and sons in the MBh, but only the relationship of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana is meaningful for the plot. It is governed by love that has degenerated into foolish permissiveness (Dhṛtarāṣṭra) and dependence that is coloured by emotional blackmail (Duryodhana), so things are much more complicated than in the earlier narratives.

[839] The story in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* usually bears the name of Kārtavīrya, although he is present only in the second part of it.

of chronology been irrelevant to the composers as the events take place within a mythical and half-mythical space that allows various kinds bends of reality. All these possibilities must be considered.

3.3.1. The narrators, the narratees and the narrative situation

In the MBh finding and defining a narrator is not such a problem as in the Vedic texts. There are many narrators and almost all of them are quite visible and clear-contoured, because the text is structured in such a way that their use and presence is central in the narration. The open questions are elsewhere. On one hand, there is a strong element of self-consciousness in the text. Not only the narrators but many narratees know beforehand what shall be narrated, and some of them also seem to be aware what the position of the text is in the literary and religious canon and how the work has been read and interpreted in the past (and along with this, perhaps how it should be read and interpreted in the future). It is also evident that the general narrator of the text (who gives it meaning) relishes in using the possibilities that the use of various narrators provide. On the other hand, all features of the text which look to us modern or post-modern cannot be taken as deliberate. The MBh is two thousand years old, so structural and stylistic devices that it uses must be viewed and measured against the literary background of India in the beginning of the Common Era.

Let us look at the two outer frames of the MBh. The voice of the fictive narrator[840] is the one which pronounces the benediction in the beginning and starts then to tell about a person called Ugraśravas, who arrives at the Naimiṣa Forest. After giving the name once the fictive narrator refers to Ugraśravas in his narrative only as "the Bard". Thus the Bard is a narrated character in the first frame. He is also a primary narrator whose narrative envelops the second frame (F(II)) and all that is inside it. As shown above, he also provides an introduction and several summaries of the whole work and an introduction and a frame to the narrative situation of F(II).

[840] The "fictive narrator" of the MBh could also be exchanged with the "general narrator" (Nelles) because s/he is in charge of such a great mass of a text which contains a multitude of different voices.

The fictive narrator is non-diegetic[841], i.e. not involved in the narrative. The Bard is a diegetic narrator in F(I): he is present in some parts of his narration as an actor who tells what he has done. His own narration places him inside F(II) as one of the narratees in the narrative situation (the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya) and what he tells proves that he indeed has been present, but the narrator of F(II) does not mention him, so he is not a character F(II). Still, his role as somebody who is present in the sacrifice is crucial — he is ultimately the narrator who is responsible for F(II) and the reason for this is that he heard it from Vaiśaṃpāyana. In this sense he is a character in the F(II). This paradox shows how intricate the two-frame structure of the MBh is.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Bard is not a character in the main narrative (the war of the Bhāratas). It is something that is only narrated to him. It has also happened in different narrative time (at least sixty years before).[842] Vaiśaṃpāyana, the diegetic narrator of the second frame (F(II)), appears as a narrated character in the F(I) and as a narrator-character in the F(II). Vaiśaṃpāyana is not involved in the main narrative but he appears in one sub-story within it (as the disciple of Vyāsa, in the story of Śuka that is narrated by Bhīṣma).[843] Is this enough to make him a character in the main narrative? Another dilemma.

To go back to the narrative situation of F(I): it is told that Ugraśravas[844], the son of Lomaharṣana, once arrived at the Naimiṣa Forest where Śaunaka and a group of seers were performing a twelve-year *sattra*. The seers become the narratees of the first part of his speech. (This is "the first introduction": see pp. 208-212). Ugraśravas tells that he has been in the snake sacrifice of king Janamejaya (= the narrative situation of F(II) and its narratee) and listened how the guru Vaiśampāyana (the narrator of F(II)) told to the king (the narratee of F(II)) the tales (= the MBh^1)[845] first recited by Vaiśampāyana's teacher Vyāsa (= the Author).

The fictive narrator is implicit (covert): he does not present himself as a narrator or characterize himself in any way.[846] In F(I) Ugraśravas has the position of an explicit narrator: it is his profession to tell tales, he is asked to do that and he is going to do that.

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[841] Non-diegetic is the term that Schmid uses. Genette's term is heterodiegetic.
[842] See 3.3.3.
[843] The many roles of Vyāsa complicate the scheme of narrators. See 3.3.2.
[844] The names of the son and the father are striking. *Ugra-* means "terrible, strong, high" and śravas- "voice, glory, fame". Here one should pick up "he who has high fame" and not "he who has frightening voice". Lomaharṣana means literally "hair-raising". But in India hair stands up with joy, not because of fear or disgust, so the name must be translated "he who gives joy".
[845] Of the meaning of the MBh^1 and MBh^2, see the diagram 7a above (p. 206) and also the chapter 3.3.3.
[846] Schmid 2010: 57-64.

In spite of his presence and speech in the F(I) he does not have distinctive personal traits. Vaiśaṃpāyana is also an explicit narrator. He sets out to tell Janamejaya the story of the ancestors of the king. Also he is summoned to narrate, although not by his narratees, like Ugraśravas, but by Vyāsa, from whom he has learnt the narrative. When Vaiśaṃpāyana starts to narrate, Janamejaya takes the place of the narratee.

In the F(I) the narratees are more conspicious than the narrator. In the first introduction Ugraśravas and the hermits exhange polite addresses and questions before going to the point. Ugraśravas notes that as the seers have "accomplished the unction [...], completed the recitations and [...] performed the fire oblations" and are "sitting at ease"[847], they want to listen to stories. He asks what stories they want. They answer that they want to hear the stories that are compiled by Vyāsa, describe them in glowing words and refer to Vaiśaṃpāyana's recitation of them mentioned earlier. The attitude of the narratees is reverential both towards the narrator and the narrative, and they do not interrupt Ugraśravas as he provides the first of his summaries (1.20-210). In the beginning of the second minor book they ask two questions, both fairly irrelevant;[848] then they fall silent and let Ugraśravas proceed by himself till the end of the third minor book. The appearance of Śaunaka in the fourth minor book ("the second introduction") does not disturb this situation at first, but the relation between the narrator and the narratee(s) changes. When Ugraśravas meets the seers in 1.4.1., they curtly ask him to wait for Śaunaka, heap praise on their teacher (not on the Bard!) and make clear that he is superior to the visitor. Śaunaka himself is condescending and conscious of his own mastery of "the lore". However, after being asked to tell stories about Śaunaka's forefathers Ugraśravas has the field all by himself as before and he narrates the stories of Bhṛgu and Ruru without interruption.

In the fifth minor book (Āstīka) Śaunaka suddenly adopts an active role, and with his repeated questions the stories begin to branch out and the tripartite pattern illustrated in the Diagram 7b surfaces. I will give a summary of the dialogue of the fifth minor book. It helps to compare it with "the table of contents" in p.179.

Śaunaka: I want to hear the reason of the snake sacrifice, and why Āstīka stopped it, and who was the king's father.

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[847] Translation by van Buitenen.
[848] They ask Ugraśravas to describe the Sāmantapañcaka (i.e. the battlefield of the Bharata war) and reveal the strength of the the armies (1.2.1., 1.2.15).

Ugraśravas: I will tell you the full story of Āstīka.
Śaunaka: Tell me the full story of Āstīka.
Ugraśravas: I will tell it as I heard it from my father. [Tells a shorter version which concentrates on Āstīka's father Jaratkāru.]
Śaunaka: [after having praised Ugraśravas] Tell the full story as your father told it.
Ugraśravas: [Tells the (back-)story of the curse of the mother of snakes, mentioning that the horse Uccaiḥśravas was born when the gods churned the ocean.]
Śaunaka: Tell me about the churning of the ocean.
Ugraśravas: [Tells the (back-)story of the churning of the ocean, and returns then to the story of the curse of the mother of snakes, which transforms into the (back-)story of Garuḍa. He proceeds to the point where the gods accuse Indra of begetting Garuḍa.]
Śaunaka: Tell me why Indra was at fault.
Ugraśravas: [Explains this and the tells the end of the story of Garuḍa.]
Śaunaka: Tell me the names of the snakes that were cursed.
Ugraśravas: [Gives a list of names.]
Śaunaka: What did the snakes do after the curse?
Ugraśravas: [Tells the (back-)story of the snake Vāsuki and his sister.]
Śaunaka: What does the name Jaratkāru mean?
Ugraśravas: [Gives an ad-hoc etymology for the name.]
Śaunaka: [laughing] That fits!
Ugraśravas: [Begins anew the story of Jaratkāru, but after three verses switches to the (back-)story of Parikṣit (1). He tells how the king met a brahman in a forest and insulted him, and how this led to his death by the snake Takṣaka, and how Janamejaya succeeded him to the throne. After this he returns to the story of Jaratkāru, tells it now really "in full" and proceeds to the point where Āstīka is born and lives with his mother.]
Śaunaka: What did Janamejaya ask his councillors at this time concerning his father's death?
Ugraśravas: [tells first about the rightfullness, impartiality, wisdom and generosity of Parikṣit, and then lets the councillors narrate the (back-)story of the death of Parikṣit (2) and proceeds to the story of the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya.]
Śaunaka: Who were the *sadasyas* (the sacrificial retinue) in the sacrifice?
Ugraśravas: [Gives a list of names, then goes on with story of the sacrifice. He tells how Āstīka hurried to stop it, got in by singing verses and made the king give him a boon.]
Śaunaka: Tell me the names of the snakes that were thrown in the fire.
Ugraśravas: [gives a long list of names and tells that Takṣaka was also thrown in, but he did not enter the flames.]
Śaunaka: How was this possible?
Ugraśravas: [explains and tells then the rest of the story of the snake sacrifice.]

In this simplified account of the dialogue between the narrator and the narratee in "The book of Āstīka" it can be seen that the questions of the narratee serve many purposes. (1)

They anticipate the story that will be narrated and give it "a title"; (2) they interrupt the narrative at a point which is connected to another story or a myth and demand yet another back-story; and (3) they slow down the narrative when action has been or will become very dramatic, by showing interest in seemingly irrelevant details.

It can also be noted that the first series of questions by Śaunaka contains the essential threads that are found in the cluster of narratives which Ugraśravas gives as "an answer". *1. The reason of the snake sacrifice?* The curse of the mother of snakes (this story, with its back-stories) and the death of Janamejaya's father caused by the snake Takṣaka (the story of Parikṣit (1)). *2. Why Āstīka stopped it?* Because the snake sacrifice as such is an abomination (the central message of the MBh = non-violence), and there are also good snakes, and Vāsuki is one of them, and the god Brahmā has planned that Vāsuki's sister Jaratkāru would be able to become the mother of Āstīka so that Āstīka would save the snakes (the story of Vāsuki and his sister). *3. Who was the king's father?* Parikṣit, whose death makes Janamejaya order the snake sacrifice (the story of Parikṣit (2) and the story of the snake sacrifice). In this way the initial questions of the narratee provide also the key for reading the complex book of Āstīka.

The dialogue of Vaiśaṃpāyana and Janamejaya in the F(II) follows the same pattern. The narrative situation of F(II) is described in the minor book 6, within the F(I). Ugraśravas tells how Vyāsa arrives at the snake sacrifice with his students and is received respectfully by Janamejaya. After Vyāsa has sat down, Janamejaya asks him to tell about "his grandfathers", their enmity and their war. Vyāsa turns to Vaiśaṃpāyana and asks him to tell the tale "as you have heard it from me". The process of the ritual itself (snakes thrown into fire) is not referred to. This horrible scene was left behind with *the Tale of Āstīka*. The only interest here is the narration of the MBh.

After this we leave the F(I) and enter the F(II), which begins with a summary of the main narrative by Vaiśaṃpāyana. Janamejaya asks the full story and presents the narrator a series of questions about the deeds of the main characters. He seems to be vexed about the submission of the Pāṇḍavas when they are driven to exile; it is implied that Janamejaya is too proud, hot-blooded and impatient to be able to imagine such a situation. Again the narratee is shown to have more personality than the narrator.

Vaiśaṃpāyana promises to tell the full story. But naturally he does not begin with the main narrative. He praises the narrative of the Bhāratas and its merits and describes then in detail the births and the family tree of the protagonists. Janamejaya wants more names and inquires why all these persons were born. Vaiśaṃpāyana reveals

that there is a cosmic design behind the story: *asuras* (demons) have been incarnated as tyrannical kings, and some of the gods promise to come down to earth to fight them. Janamejaya wants now to hear everything about celestial beings and their origins, and Vaiśaṃpāyana obeys, giving a concise catalogue of these. Janamejaya asks about the presence of celestials on earth, and Vaiśaṃpāyana explains how they have been incarnated as the characters of the MBh. Janamejaya asks about the dynasty of the Kurus, his ancestors, and Vaiśaṃpāyana starts to tell about Śakuntalā, Yayāti, Pūru and others.

The narrative proceeds in blocks like this. Every now and then Janameyaja wants to hear in full a particular episode, and the narrator leaves the main back-story hanging, plunges into a "back-back-story" and after telling it returns to original storyline. Questions of the narratee summarize, anticipate, guide and halt the narrative flow. The narrator also summarizes, turns backwards and tells the story of the celestials and ancestors again and again in various ways.[849] In this undulating and repetitive manner the narrative winds itself towards the "core story".[850]

The questions of Janamejaya come sometimes often and sometimes rarely. When there is much action or dialogue within the narrative, or when there is a large, solid embedding (the "War" and "Dharma" books, the long narratives of the *Āraṇyakaparvan*) both Vaiśaṃpāyana and Janamejaya stay silent. But when the narrative slows down or there is a junction, Janamejaya "wakes up" and queries why something happened, how somebody succeeded doing something or what the persons did next. It must be noted that this succession of questions and answers stretches over the whole text of the MBh. There can be long intervals between Janamejaya's questions, but the narrative situation in which the seer and the king converse is maintained throughout the F(II), and it is one of the features that binds the text together.

MBh is said to be "a very interactive epic".[851] The interaction, as shown in the dialogues of the F(I) and F(II), is a part of the structure: it serves to bring order and clarity into this huge and protean mass of text. The questions serve as summaries of episodes. They help the concrete, real-life audience to get through the text by repeating, reminding, demanding a pause and an explanation or a specification. When the narrative is dramatic, unified and easy to follow, there is no need for questions. (As in the real-life storytelling.)

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[849] E.g. in 1.90.6-96 Vaiśaṃpāyana summarizes all the back-stories that have been told and the main story in form of a genealogy.
[850] It is reached in 1.91-94, when Vaiśaṃpāyana tells the story of the king Saṃtanu, his son Bhīṣma and "the fisher girl" Satyavatī, who has already given birth to Vyāsa.
[851] Earl 2011: 15.

Although narrators and narratees are used as important structural elements, it does not mean that they act like cogs in a machine. They show differences. They represent different social classes and personas. Ugraśravas is a bard of the warrior caste. Saṃjaya comes from the same *sūta* class. Bhīṣma is a high-caste warrior, like Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas, but he behaves like a seer.[852] Vyāsa, Vaiśaṃpāyana, Śaunaka and most narrators in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* are brahmans and seers and so rank higher than the warriors. They live longer than ordinary humans, and they can see the future and utter terrible curses. As narrators they are all-knowing, so Vyāsa probably knew the whole narrative it happened (see 3.3.2). But it is not clear if Vaiśaṃpāyana is an all-knowing narrator because of his being a seer, or because he retells the narrative as told by Vyāsa.

Saṃjaya and Bhīṣma stand out as narrators: Saṃjaya is subjective and dramatic, Bhīṣma slow and ponderous. These qualities, however, may arise from the content of their speeches. This is perhaps the reason for the different narrative styles of Ugraśravas and Vaiśaṃpāyana. The former has to introduce the work, and this makes his speech formulaic. He also tells in F(I) traditional tales that appear to have a fixed form. Vaiśaṃpāyana, who is responsible for the narration of the main plot, is telling "a new tale", so he is free to use dramatic, emotional, colourful and humorous language which shows in all the episodes that include action, characterization or dramatic tension. The description of the characters of the protagonists is in many parts astonishingly modern. Small gestures show the impetuous and envious nature of Duryodhana and the seething resentment of Draupadī about the passivity of Yudhiṣṭhira. On the other hand, the speech and actions of strong man Bhīma are a constant source of hyperbolic humour and excitement.[853]

Here is a short example of style of the F(II) in the book 1 (1.140.1-20). The translation is by van Buitenen. A pair of man-eating demon siblings, Hiḍimba and his sister Hiḍimbā, spot the Pāṇḍavas in the forest. The brother sends his sister to spy on them, and she falls in love with the muscular, handsome Bhīma and takes a beautiful human form. Later on the two of them marry and have a son called Ghaṭotkaca ("The bald pot"). The son has a bald head which is round like a pot, and he grows up to be a super-strong warrior.

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[852] The Bhṛgus are also a mixed lot. Originally they are brahmans and seers, but (Bhārgava) Rāma and Viśvāmitra come from a branch of the king Kuśika. The former is a seer who acts like a warrior and the latter both a warrior and a seer.

[853] In theory the style should be attributed to Vyāsa. But as we hear the voice of Vaiśaṃpāyana, the diction is ultimattely attached to him.

Vaiśaṃpāyana said:
The lordly Rākṣasa Hiḍimba, noticing that his sister was late returning, descended from his tree and went down to the Pāṇḍavas, eyes bloodshot, arms strong, hair standing up, strength ample, girth and height like a rain cloud's, tusks honed, face aflame. As soon as Hiḍimbā saw him loom with his deformed appearance, she said trembling to Bhīma: "There is the evil man-eater coming; he is furious! You and your brothers do what I tell you. I have the powers of the Rākṣasa, hero, and I can go anywhere. Climb on my hip and I'll take you through the sky. Wake up your sleeping brothers and mother, scourge of your enemies, I shall take you all and go through the sky!"
Bhīma said:
Have no fear, broad-hipped woman. No one will harm us as long as I am here. I shall kill him before your eyes, my pretty. This degraded Rākṣasa is no match for my strength. Not even all the Rākṣasas combined could stand my throbbing in battle, timorous girl. Look at my arms, round as elephant trunks, and these thighs like bludgeons, and this hard chest of mine! Today you shall see my might that is like Indra's, my lovely of the opulent hips. Don't despise me now, thinking that I am a mere human!
The Rākṣasī[854] said:
I don't despise you, tiger among men, who have the beauty of a God. But I have seen the havoc this Rākṣasa has wrought on humans!
Vaiśaṃpāyana said:
While Bhīmasena[855] was talking with her in this way, O Bhārata, the furious, man-eating Rākṣasa heard her words. Hiḍimba looked at the human form she was wearing, the crown of her head covered with flowers, her face shining like the full moon, with beautiful eyes, eyebrows, nose, and hair, and delicate nails and skin, decked with all sorts of ornaments and wearing a very sheer robe. And as he saw the very enticing human form she was wearing, he suspected that she was lusting after a man and the man-eater became very angry. Furious with his sister, he opened his big eyes wide, chief of the Kurus, and said to her: "What dimwit comes to my way when I am hungry? Aren't you afraid of my fury, Hiḍimbā, have you lost your senses? A curse on you, sluttish man-chaser, who are out to hurt me! You defame all the ancient lords of the Rākṣasas! These humans for whom you have perpetrated this outrage on me, I'll slaughter them all this instant along with you!" Bloody-eyed, Hiḍimba fell on Hiḍimbā to kill her, gnashing his teeth.

There are of course stanzas behind the translation, and the formulas and vocatives that are the staple of the epic verse style do not fit prose as smoothly. Vaiśaṃpāyana addresses his narratee Janamejaya with "O Bhārata" and Bhīma gives flattering epithets to Hiḍimbā. The text is full of attributes and metaphors that are partly stereotypical (here reflecting

[854] Demoness, female rākṣasa.
[855] The full name of Bhīma.

the ideal of beautiful female and also a horrific monster) and partly original inventions. This small example is enough to show the vivid style of the narrator of F(II).

Some embedded narratives are told more elegantly and in a more literary style than others. The three long stories of the *Āraṇyakaparvan* are quite elaborate, especially *Nala*, and also the story of Śuka in the book 13, and the episodes in which Yudhiṣṭhira meets his divine father Dharma. The *Bhagavadgītā*, in which Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu speaks inside the frame of Saṃjaya, has an polished poetic form. On the other hand, many tales are narrated in a simple way like folktales. Narrators are not given only narratives that "suit them": there is variance. Kṛṣṇa, who is a prince and a warrior, tells about his battle with the king of Saubha and about the belligerent Bhārgava Rāma, but also the seers tell tales about kings and heroes. Bhīṣma tells both pious and wordly stories. The variation is more often linked with the subject and context than with a change of narrator.[856]

The stance of the narrator(s) is mostly sympathetic and concerned. The style shows archaism in standard formulas and epithets glued to characters, so that they are "noble" or high-minded" even when doing something morally ambigious, but the tone of the narrative is nevertheless involved. This is especially evident when the aftermath of the war is described. The narrator of F(II) sympathizes "against the grain" with those who think that Bhīma has killed Duryodhana in a devious way, and with Gāndhārī when she perceives the devastation of the war, feels the bitter taste of loss and boils with hatred towards the victors. The feelings and gestures, discrepancies and quirks of the characters are shown and appreciated. This marks a development in narrative style compared with the neutral attitude of the brāhmaṇic narrators towards their characters, which is still partly visible in the retellings of the Vedic stories in the MBh.

The narratees show a lot of individual variance. Śaunaka is self-assured and class-conscious: he is a brahman and a seer and Ugraśravas is only a kṣatriya and a *sūta*, in spite of his wide knowledge of traditional tales. Yudhiṣṭhira is hesitant, frustrated, sad, headstrong and angry. He resists the persuasive force of the narratives with which the various narrators want to alter his mood and thoughts. After Bhīṣma's and Kṛṣṇa's teachings he is in a lighter mood, and this shows also in his responses to the tales told to him. It has already been mentioned that Janamejaya is impatient. His fiery nature is

[856] What shows in synchronic reading as variation of narrative voices may well be caused by different sources and layers. Therefore it is not useful to describe the narrators of the MBh in great detail. I have not brought up the question of the MBh containing parts that have different origins (and datings) because it is not relevant in the approach that I have chosen for this study. Here the MBh is taken to represent more a phase in literary history than an individual, isolated text.

reflected also in his determination to kill all the snakes in a sacrifice. Like Śaunaka, he is proud of his ancestors and wants to know all about them. His tone reflects the changes in the mood of the narrative, so the tone is less shrill and imperial in the later books. This would be natural after hearing such a long and sad story. So the interruption of his sacrifice does not make him angry but "much pleased".[857] Later, in the Book 15, when Vyāsa allows him to see his dead father, he is "filled with joy" and speaks with awe and reverence to Āstīka who has spoiled his sacrifice.[858] The books 12 and 13 which teach *dharma* to the king are directed as much to him as to Yudhiṣṭhira, even though all their problems are not the same.

Ugraśravas, the narrator of F(I), knows the whole narrative beforehand: he must, because he is reciting it all. Also his narratee Śaunaka appears to know it, but he wants to hear it anyway. Vaiśaṃpāyana knows the part that he narrates but not necessarily that part of F(I) that precedes it. His narratee Janamejaya seems to know only those parts of the story that concern his early ancestors, but as he needs Uttaṅka to learn how his father died, he cannot be well informed about the Bhārata war. Inside the F(II) most of the narrators and narratees, except Vyāsa, do not seem to be aware of being a part of a bigger narrative (the MBh^2), even though the seers and Kṛṣṇa can see the future.[859]

There are quite a many different third-degree narrators and narratees who are also narrated figures in regard to F(II). All these go through similar motions as the corresponding agents of the outer frames when an embedded narrative is introduced. When e.g. the seer Bṛhadaśva visits Yudhiṣṭhira in the forest, the king receives him courteously and then initiates the narrative by describing his sorry state. His kingdom has been robbed from him because he did not know the dice. "There is no man unhappier than I am", he laments (3.49.34). Thus he invites a. a story about an unhappy king and b. a story where all is lost because of gambling. Bṛhadaśva responds by saying that he can tell a story about a man who was unhappier than Yudhiṣṭhira. The king wants to hear about this man. Bṛhadaśva tells that the man was Nala, and just like Yudhiṣṭhira he was cheated by his kinsman and driven to the forest (= a brief summary of the first part of the story). But unlike Nala, Yudhiṣṭhira is surrounded by his mighty brothers. So Nala is more

[857] 1.53.11. It is not clear if the narration of the MBh by Vaiśaṃpāyana is finished before the interruption of the snake sacrifice. See 3.3.3.
[858] 15.43.9.
[859] Kṛṣṇa knows how he and his people shall die and he hints to it long before it happens.

unhappy. After the summary Yudhiṣṭhira asks the full story, and Bṛhadaśva begins by describing Nala's virtues.

In contrast to the two outer frames, the embeddings in F(II) do not usually contain long back-stories or digressions, but begin with the protagonist and stick to the main plot, even when the narrative is as long as *Nala*. In accordance with this, the narratees as a rule do not interrupt the narratives with questions. The story of *Rāma*, however, has more active narratees, which supports the idea that it was lifted from an early version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[860] Also the "War" books (6-10) and the "Dharma" books (12-13) are an exception, because they both resemble the outer frames. They present a large frame with the same narrator and narratee, and the theme and structure require interaction. In the "War" sequence Saṃjaya's narration that reports what happens "in real time" in the battlefield calls out for drama, and thus he needs response from the king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who is made desperate by his physical and spiritual blindness. In the most action-packed and intensive sections, e.g. when describing the death of a great warrior, the narrative is continuous, but elsewhere Dhṛtarāṣṭra's presence and feelings are felt, as he interrupts with lengthy summaries, laments and strings of questions about details of the battle and actions of various persons. Often he reacts with dismay and horror and faints, overcome with emotion. In the books 6 and 7 he describes the force and valour of the Kauravas and repeats six times that they are beaten because of fate. As many times Saṃjaya answers, before resuming his tale, that it is not fate but the old king himself who has caused the disaster with wrong decisions and partiality to the wicked Duryodhana.[861]

Although the narrative in the "War" sequence appears to happen simultaneously with the narrating, it is mostly a report of past events by an eye-witness. In the beginning of each chapter Saṃjaya comes to the king and tells which hero has been killed, giving a summary. After Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks for the full story, Saṃjaya tells it by starting from the preliminaries of the battle, and the high point of the plot comes only at the end of each book. So, the "War" sequence is patterned like the F(I) and F(II). In the same way, the "Dharma" books 12 and 13 show much interaction between the narrator Bhīṣma and the narratee Yudhiṣṭhira. There are long streches of conversation about ethics, Yudhiṣṭhira asking about details and applications of *dharma* and Bhīṣma giving the answers. The choice of embedded dialogues and narratives is also guided and modified by the questions of Yudhiṣṭhira.

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[860] See the chapter 3.5.1.
[861] See Mangels 1994: 104-106.

Both Ugraśravas and Vaiśaṃpāyana are first-person narrators, but they use the pronoun "I" only in the beginning of their narrative, as they assert their position as narrators. They become invisible as soon as they start tell about events that happen in another age and which they have not witnessed. However, the first person of the narrator is implicitly present in the vocatives ("o bull of the Bharata clan") that construct the listening "you" of the narratee (and naturally in the responses and questions of the narratee when these occur). Most of the embedded narrators (Bṛhadaśva, Lomaśa etc.) are similarly non-diegetic and show their first person only indirectly by vocatives. Saṃjaya, however, is a first-person diegetic narrator. Other diegetic narrators who use the first person are Kṛṣṇa ("The story of Saubha", 3.15-23), Arjuna (when telling of his adventures, 3.160-171) and Mārkaṇḍeya (in one tale, i.e. "The cycle of yugas", 3. 186-188). These characters tell about what they themselves have done or witnessed.

"The killing of Kirmira" (3.12) presents a curious case. In this passage the onus of the narrator is passed on from Vyāsa to Maitreya and finally to Vidura. First Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks Vyāsa to talk sense to Duryodhana. When the seer Maitreya arrives, Vyāsa departs, saying that Maitreya will tell Duryodhana what he needs to know. Maitreya tells to Duryodhana that Pāṇḍavas are too strong for him: they have performed magnificent deeds, and recently Bhīma has killed a rākṣasa called Kirmīra. Duryodhana shrugs away the advice, drawing patterns to the floor with his foot, and Maitreya gets angry and curses him. Dhṛtarāṣṭra tries to pacify him, and he modifies his curse. Then Dhṛtarāṣṭra asks how Bhīma killed Kirmīra. Maitreya says that he will not tell anything to resentful hearers. They will hear all from Vidura, the half-brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, when he comes. Maitreya departs, and Duryodhana goes also away, because he is too upset to listen. Vidura comes and narrates the story to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.[862] It is as if Vyāsa ("the Author") and through him the composers of the MBh, wanted to show their artistry and also a sense of humour by showing how the narrators push around the hot potato of narration when the narratee is unwilling to hear them.[863]

A similar juggling act takes place also in the narrative situation of F(II). Janamejaya asks Vyāsa to tell the story and Vyāsa declines and asks his student Vaiśaṃpāyana to be the narrator in his stead. "The Author" who is said to have composed

[862] Vidura is also a first-person diegetic narrator. Although he has not witnessed what he tells about, only heard of it, he is involved in the narrative and inhabits the narrative world where his story takes place.
[863] See Mangels 1994: 2-4.

the MBh (which is his "entire thought")[864] and appears everywhere in it does not want to be caught in the act of reciting his work.[865] But it is told that he has narrated it already several times, so perhaps it is not surprising that he retires to the background and lets his student perform.

The motives of the narrators for the narrating a certain story are many times evident or even uttered aloud by them or their narratees. They may nevertheless be complex. Ugraśravas has many reasons to narrate the MBh. He is a professional bard and the MBh could be his set piece, if he only has the time and the occasion to perform. He has recently[866] been in the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya and heard the MBh recited (anew?) by Vaiśaṃpāyana: it is fresh in his mind, together with the dramatic interruption of the sacrifice by Āstīka, so it would be natural for him to narrate it all to an audience who is willing to sit and listen (for at least a year). The narratees (the hermits) praise the quality and high status of the "sacred account of the Bhāratas" and say that they want to hear it. The narrator praises it, too, and later it is said that it is a religious merit to hear even a stanza of the MBh to be recited. To this motive one may add the tradition of telling and listening stories in the intervals of the sacrifice, which the text itself refers to. Ugraśravas says that his narratees have completed the rituals and sit now "at ease". It is time for leisure. Also Śaunaka is ready to listen after he has finished the ritual and is sitting among his ritual retinue. Later, in 1.53.30, Śaunaka says that the MBh was recited in the snake sacrifice between the rites and Ugraśravas confirms this, adding that: "the brahmins told tales that rested on the Veda. But Vyāsa (!) told the wondrous Epic, the grand Bhārata."[867]

The place of narrating for both the F(I) and F(II) is a long sacrifice, *sattra*, which contains many breaks. Such a long text as the MBh cannot be narrated at one sitting: this would take at least a year, even if the portion for each day would be large. So it is natural that the narrative situation for the outer frames would be an immensely long ritual that the compilers knew from their reading of Vedic texts. It is not likely that such rituals were

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[864] 1.1.23.
[865] See 3.3.2.
[866] It is not very clear how much time Ugraśravas has taken between the listening of the MBh in the snake sacrifice and the arrival in the Naimiṣa Forest. Ugraśravas says that after leaving the sacrifice, he wandered about and visited "many sacred fords and sanctuaries", travelled then to Sāmantapañcaka to see the scene of the Bhārata war, and came from there to the forest. How long did his pilgimage take? Half a year? One year? Perhaps not a very long time. But there is some confusion in this, as he talks about Āstīka growing old and having children (see p. 187 above, and 3.3.3. below).
[867] Here Vyāsa is mentioned as the narrator of the MBh in the snake sacrifice. Also Śaunaka says that Vyāsa was there the narrator (1.53.33). However, when he tells about the sacrifice, Ugraśravas says that Vyāsa let Vaiśaṃpāyana narrate the MBh.

ever executed. The 12-year *sattra* is as much a fantasy and fiction as the Naimiṣa Forest, the snake sacrifice, ageless seers, rākṣasas, heros fathered by gods and almost everything in the MBh. However, for the real-life audience of the MBh that probably consisted of such brahmans and nobles who could pay for longer rituals or religious feasts, this kind of platform for the mythical recitation of the MBh would have sounded true.

Saṃjaya as an eye and an eye-witness for the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra is also a clever textual stratagem. It combines the freshness and nearness of an onlooker and the capacity of the "divine eye" to see everything to produce a raw and powerful experience of the carnage of the battle. The effect is doubled by the extreme reactions of the narratee (like fixed denial and swooning). They underline the shock of hearing that persons who one loves and respects are butchered like cattle.

The narrative situation in the "Dharma" books is somewhat different. The dialogue of Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma by the deathbed of the latter comes near to the conversational philosophical texts of the late Vedic age, the *Upaniṣads* and *Āraṇyakas*. This connection is made stronger by the inclusion of other philosophical discussions within the frame of the main dialogue. The embedded tales are used like parables or *exempla* which illustrate some ethical point and give evidence on its viability.[868] The motive for their telling is the teaching of *dharma*, ultimately to persuade Yudhiṣṭhira to accept his responsibility and make him a good king.

In the *Āraṇyakaparvan* most of the narrators are seers who as a rule possess a remarkable array of ancient stories and legends from which its is easy to choose an edifying and entertaining narrative. Consequently, the motivation to narrate is persuasion or diversion. Like the 12-year *sattra*, the 12-year exile in the forest is an ideal setting for telling tales. They bring variation to the episodes which tell about the adventures of the heroes. The forest itself can be either a dangerous and exiting wilderness or a place for retreat and introspection, and both these possibilities are used in the MBh.

In the MBh there is a coexistence of literary culture and oral storytelling which is typical for early Indian literature. It is fairly certain that the main story existed before as an oral epic of some kind,[869] and many of the embedded narratives were a part of the "floating mass" of the oral narratives that were also used by the composers of Vedic texts.

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[868] As in the case of the *Upaniṣads*, there is a link to the later fable collections such as the *Pañcatantra* which also use stories as *exempla*.

[869] This is still a strong hypothesis even if the composition of the present text (or rather its prototype) would have been compiled by a committee(s) of experts from various branches of knowledge as Hiltebeitel maintains.

This oral background is not subdued or wiped away but, on the contrary, retained and emphasized in many ways in the present text. The narrative situation with an active narratee which is reiterated throughout the MBh mimicks occasions of oral storytelling, and the stanzas in many parts fit neatly the oral-formulaic theory. The F(I) talks about various versions that different groups of brahmans learn (1.1.50.; see 3.3.3.), reflecting the system of preserving the Vedic texts, and both F(I) and F(II) also introduce a succession of bards and seers who pass on the MBh.[870] This is an archaism: the text is too huge and structurally complicated to have been passed on orally in the form that all the surviving manuscripts reflect, and there is no real-life testimony of the text being divided into parts for different schools to be protected and transmitted, like the Veda, or any evidence of a systematic program of teaching it to new transmitters.

It has been pointed out that the F(I) and F(II) contain various memory aids that are useful to the real-life narrator and narratee, and the text was certainly recited to the audience, not read by them. But the latter applies also to later texts. In our culture where prose, printing and silent reading are the norm, it is often hard to remember that in the age of manuscripts, which could not be reproduced *en masse*, literary texts were enjoyed by listening to them.[871] Poetry and drama were the main genres of literature in the age of classical *kāvya* literature (100-1000 CE), and they require to be recited aloud and acted before an audience. The MBh has certainly been recited, but in parts, not as a whole. Because it was packed with narratives, later authors have used it mainly as a source of individual stories and episodes which could be developed to a long courtly poem or a drama. If one would like to recite all of the MBh or perform it on stage, it would take many, many years.[872]

Why is the oral origin emphasized in this kind of a literary work?[873] There are several reasons. In the Vedic and pre-classical period when various schools of preservers of sacred texts, commentaries and philosophies took their form, the question of authority

[870] See Diagram 11 p. 261 for the transmission of the MBh according to its own story of it.
[871] The ancient Greeks and Romans did not read, but had texts read to them, and the habit continued through the Middle Ages to the advent of printing.
[872] The most suitable form to try this out would be a television series. The *Mahabharat* shown in the Indian television in the years 1988-1990 had 94 45-minute episodes, but the Hindi text was naturally a radically truncated and free retelling of the epic, with some quotations from the original text. It concentrated on the main plot and the story of Kṛṣṇa. The outer frames and most of the embeddings were absent because they do not work well in a dramatic production. Peter Brook's version, also a free adaptation, introduced frames and author and narrator figures because they suited the dramatic vision that Brook had in mind.
[873] The episode referred to (p. 175 n. 628), in which the god Brahmā wants the MBh to be written down and Vyāsa dictates to Gaṇeśa, was included in Brook's film.

became crucial. It was necessary to maintain a link to ancient figures whose sacredness, knowledge and insight was uncontested. Although the ideological emphasis shifted from the rituals and *mantras* to the teaching of *dharma*, the connection to the greatest (and oldest) authorities was maintained.

This glorification of pure, ancient wisdom of ancient seers and their students is apparent everywhere in the MBh, but most emphatic it is in the two outer frame stories. They want to establish the text as "a fifth Veda" by presenting an author who is a seer *par excellence* and has even divided the Veda into four schools. He is a *vedavyāsa*, the arranger of the Veda. The frames illustrate how the work was conceived as Vyāsa's "entire thought", the product of "ocean of his mind" (MBh 1.53.34.), and transmitted to his students like sacred texts and learning is passed on from gurus to disciples. Parallel to this is the oral transmission of ancient epics by bards, *sūtas*. It is less sacred than the guru line but it served well to prop up the idea of continuity of an ancient tradition. The original profession of *sūtas* as charioteers reveals that they are testifiers and singers of heroic feats. Saṃjaya in the main narrative is a bard by accident, a bard in progress so as to say, but Ugraśravas is a bard that comes from a family of singers of tales. In F(I) his father Lomaharṣana is elevated to the position of a student of Vyāsa, and when Ugraśravas starts to tell the MBh to Śaunaka, there is an element of competition with the revered father who had enjoyed Vyāsa's teaching. The two traditional ways of transmission of texts, the Vedic way and the Epic way, are fused in the frames of the MBh to make the succession backwards to the Great Ancients stronger.

The highlighting of the storytelling situation is also a method of structuring and arranging the text, as said above. It shortens the distance between the text and the audience. The real-life narratees are taken into the narrative situation: they join Janamejaya and the narratees of the main narrative to listen a voice that narrates familiar "old stories" in a way that is also familiar to them. The familiarity with the tales was also important. The audience did not want new stories: they wanted the old story retold.

3.3.2. "The Author"

Vyāsa, "the Author", occupies a special place in the MBh. Indeed his character, his position, his presence and his absence are among the features that make the MBh a remarkable text.[874] As Fitzgerald notes[875], his role must not be over-elaborated: it is not probable that there is a sophisticated transcendental vision of the author and his text behind it[876], although the MBh, at least in certain sections, has transcendental aims. However, Vyāsa's various positions and appearances in the text are intriguing.

Bits of Vyāsa's biography are found scattered in several sections of the MBh. The first bit comes from Ugraśravas, who tells that "the Author" was born as the son of the seer Parāśara and Satyavatī and he composed the MBh after (a) he had arranged the Veda and (b) he had begot, at his mother's behest, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura and retreated to a hermitage to perform austerities. He revealed the MBh to the men after these three sons had died.[877] Ugraśravas adds later[878] that Vyāsa was born on an island (*dvīpa*) in the river Yamunā (thence his name Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, "the dark islander") and his mother remained virgin, and by his willpower he forced himself to grow into adult as soon as he was born and learned the Vedas and the histories on the way. Thus it seems that he was born with yogic faculties, and afterwards he was unsurpassed in austerities, Vedic studies, vows and fasts, in temper and in progeny.[879] Vaiśaṃpāyana does not add much to this. When he begins his narration, he says first that Vyāsa rose daily for three years to create the MBh.[880] The story of his birth, told by his mother, comes again much later and with more detail, when he is summoned to father sons for his deceased half-brother.[881] The act that is most talked about before the main narrative begins is the composing and transmitting the MBh and begetting three royal sons, but in the text Vyāsa

[874] The person of Vyāsa has been a subject of many studies. Most helpful are Sullivan (1999 (1990)), Mangels (1994, esp. 38-44) and Hiltebeitel (2001a, esp. chapters 2 and 8) together with Fitzgerald's review article of the last-mentioned (2003).
[875] Fitzgerald 2003: 816-818.
[876] Hiltebeitel 2001a: 304-312.
[877] 1.1.53-55.
[878] 1.54.1-4.
[879] If he was unsurpassed in *yoga* and austerities, why was he not able to attain the *mokṣa* like his son Śuka? Perhaps Śuka was *sui generis* and does not count? The MBh is full of these paradoxes.
[880] 1.56.32.
[881] 1.99.6-14. It seems that Satyavatī has been earlier reluctant to tell that she had had a lover before his marriage to the king. But as this lover was a seer, it does not matter, at least not to brahmans. Also Kuntī keeps quiet about her first-born Karṇa, and this leads to tragic consequences.

is met most of all as a character. As a narrator he tells some of the embedded stories, but he is never seen to narrate the MBh.

In his study of Vyāsa Sullivan discusses his roles in the MBh.[882] He is first and foremost a seer (*ṛṣi*), who has earned his name Vyāsa ("divider, arranger") by dividing the Veda into four books. He has also arranged the MBh by dividing it into books after "seeing" it. Foresight is typical of seers: as a long life, it is earned by intense practice of yoga, in which Vyāsa is an expert. Vyāsa has a *divyacakṣus*, "the divine eye", which makes him all-seeing and omniscient. This is reflected in the recitation of Vaiśaṃpāyana. The narrator knows many things that the characters of his narrative are not aware of, like Karṇa's birth and the outcome of war.

Because of his foresight Vyāsa predicts things and intervenes to warn, negotiate and set things straight, as when he acts as a midwife to Gāndhāri's monstrous fetus.[883] His appearances and disappearances are both sudden: unpredictablity suits him as a seer and a yogin.[884] He is able to pronounce curses and give boons. Early in his life he curses his offspring because he gets angry with their mothers.[885] One son is born blind because his mother could not bear to look at Vyāsa.[886] The other son has white skin because his mother gets pale for the same reason. Perhaps Vyāsa repents his rashness, because later in the MBh he is more reluctant to curse. In the Kirmīra episode he invites Maitreya, who does not play any other role in the MBh, to curse Duryodhana. When Aśvatthāman uses his ascetic power to wrong ends, Vyāsa lets Kṛṣṇa first curse him and then affirms the curse. He is more generous with boons. He gives "the divine eye" to several persons and raises the dead from their graves to console the grieving relatives.

The arrangement of Vedic texts and Vedic learning are mentioned always when Vyāsa is presented as the author of the MBh in F(I). This lends to the MBh the authority of the Veda and to Vyāsa the pre-eminent position to create the MBh. Inside the F(II), where Vyāsa's role as "the Author" is not visible, he is not as much attached to the Veda

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[882] Sullivan 1999: 29-56.
[883] Hiltebeitel lists and describes 41 occasions where Vyāsa intervenes the action of the MBh (2001a: 47-89).
[884] Sullivan 1999: 37.
[885] Some fatalities in the MBh are recycled ultimately to be the fault of women, but it is not as usual as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.
[886] Still around in Janamejaya's time, Vyāsa should not be too old in the main narrative, because he is the grandfather of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. But all seers seem to be old already when they are born and Vyāsa grows up quickly. Vyāsa has matted orange hair, a red beard and fiery eyes, and the two women he beds are afraid of him. This seems natural but it is called in the text "a defect of virtue".

but to ascetic practices, yoga and *sāṃkhya*, and the mysticism around Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa.

His Vedic expertise shows most of all when he acts as a priest in the two kingly rituals that Yudhiṣṭhira performs[887]. He is also the family priest to both Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the Pāṇḍavas, but above all he is a confidante and counsellor.[888] Ideologically he is an ascetic, and he extols the virtues of ascetism, e.g. in the story of Mudgala (3.245). He is not a person who detaches himself from the world (*sannyāsin*) but a forest hermit (*vanaprastha*). At times he retires to his hermitage[889], and then again appears to alter (correct?) the narrative that he himself has "engendered", which is somewhat puzzling. Throughout the MBh he strives to get his voice heard. His son Vidura and the *sūta* Saṃjaya propagate his views in the court of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Vyāsa tries to pacify the hatred between the cousins and persuade Dhṛtarāṣṭra to keep his son Duryodhana under control. The results are not impressive: Pāṇḍavas listen to his advice but the Kauravas do not. But does Vyāsa really want complete success? Then there would be no epic. Like a sophisticated author, Vyāsa is not partial: he reveals hidden things also to the enemies of the Pāṇḍavas. He tells Aśvatthāman that the latter had been a yogi and a devotee of Śiva in his earlier life. This prompts Aśvatthāman to pray to Śiva in order to attain a terrible weapon against the Pāṇḍavas.

Vyāsa is a teacher of Veda, yoga and transcendental wisdom for his five special pupils, Śuka, Vaiśaṃpāyana, Paila, Jaimini and Sumantu, and later he teaches others. Śuka, his son, surpasses his father in spirituality and attains *mokṣa*. This fills his father with grief and shame.[890] It is said that Vyāsa reveals the MBh first to Śuka and then to "other students". They pass the narrative to the gods and ancestors, the perfect Śuka for some reason to demi-gods, i.e. gandharvas, yakṣas and rākṣasas.[891] This happens some time before Vaiśaṃpāyana is delegated to narrate the MBh to Janamejaya and thus to the mankind. F(I) tells that the bard Lomaharṣana, the father of Ugraśravas, has got the MBh from Vyāsa and recited it to brahmans and also to his son, and Vyāsa has himself already recited the MBh to the seers in the Naimiṣa Forest.[892] So the details of the actual

[887] In these rituals he is the *brahman* priest, who knows all four Vedas and supervises the performance of others. This suits his role as the "director" of the MBh.
[888] The Pāṇḍavas have another family priest, Dhaumya, for the daily rituals.
[889] The MBh does not tell anything of his ascetic practices or the exact whereabouts of his hermitage.
[890] Vyāsa is exceptionally sensitive and considerate among the noble seers. Others seem to show only their negative feelings: they are easily provoked and curse those who annoy them. Vyāsa acts like this only when he begets his two elder sons.
[891] 1.1.63-64.
[892] 1.13.6-8.

transmission of the MBh are not quite clear. The basic route of the MBh to the mankind, however, goes like this: Vyāsa teaches his composition to Vaiśaṃpāyana, who recites it to Janamejaya in the snake sacrifice, and Ugraśravas who is present there travels to Naimiṣa forest to tell Vaiśaṃpāyana's version to Śaunaka and his hermits in between their 12-year *sattra* (even though these have heard it narrated before by Vyāsa and Lomaharṣana).

Both Sullivan and Mangels draw attention to the fact that "the Author" is unable to change the course of the plot with his interventions as a character.[893] What is more, he himself causes the disaster that he tries to prevent, by fathering imperfect sons, aiding the birth of Kauravas who are incarnations of demons, letting the dice game go wrong, and giving advice that is not heeded.[894] Here his two roles seem to be at loggerheads. How to explain his ambiguity? Well, if he has "seen" the MBh like the Vedic seers "saw" the Vedic hymns, it is not his invention but something that has been revealed to him. So he has to follow a fixed script as a well-meaning character who cannot do much to alter it, like Vidura. But in the MBh it is said that seers can be mightier than gods. Who then, mightier than both seers and gods, has composed the MBh? On the other hand, was it not composed only after Vyāsa's kingly sons had died? It is also repeated several times that the MBh is "Vyāsa's entire thought". This should indicate that he has composed it, unlike Veda, which he has only "seen" and arranged. Is it not peculiar that he would write a script where everything goes wrong and write himself within this narrative a role in which he is helpless to prevent the catastrophe?

It is peculiar, but still it may be true. If the grand design behind the plot of the MBh is indeed to prove that war is hell and violence brings harm to all, or if "the Author" wants to describe a world of men in the degenerate age of Kaliyuga and on the brink of the cosmic conflagration, or if he wants to prove that fate cannot be changed by anybody, not even a mighty seer or a god like Kṛṣṇa, the enigma of "the Author" who has limited power over his work is solved.[895]

Sullivan is of the opinion that Vyāsa is the representative of the god Brahmā on earth.[896] Brahmā has created the world and is omniscient but not omnipotent. There are

[893] Mangels 1994: 22-25.
[894] Sullivan 1999: 57-65.
[895] The other explanation is that "the Author" was added to the narrative after its main theme was fixed and the rearrangement led to two different alternatives to interpret the text. This happens also elsewhere in the MBh.
[896] Sullivan 1999: 81-101.

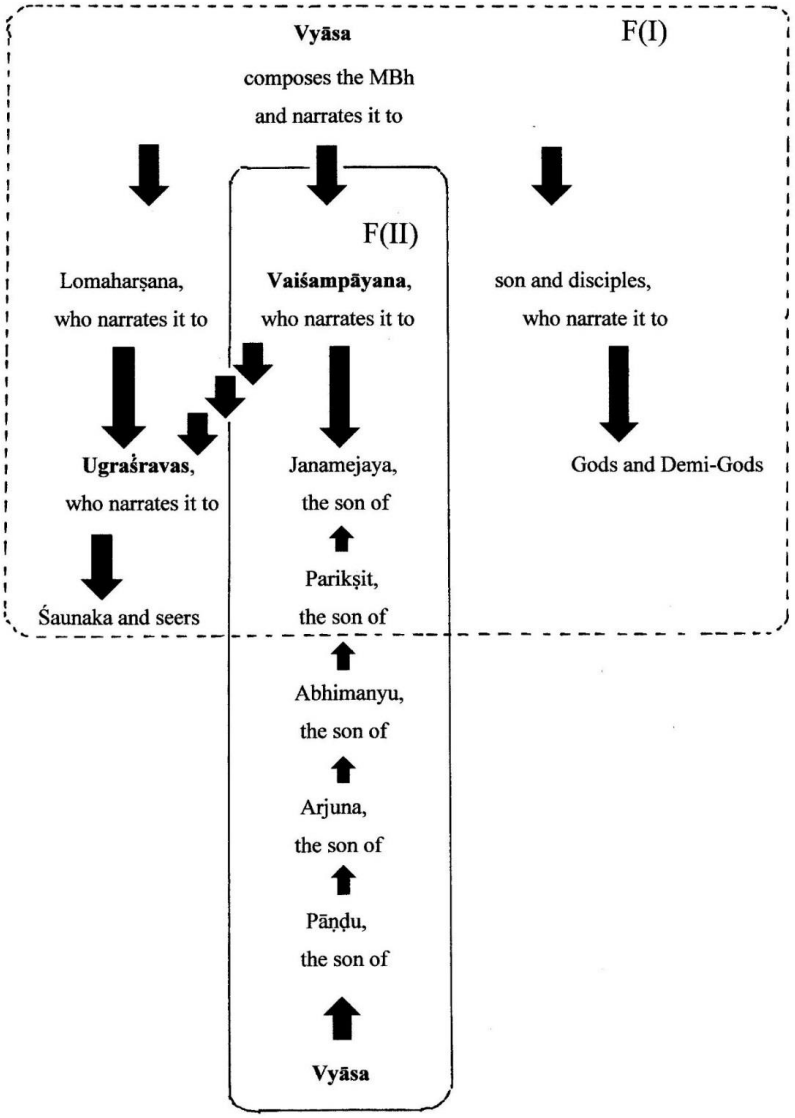
demons who practice austerities to get magical powers and terrorize the world, and seers that hurl terrible curses that threaten the peace on earth, and these misfortunes cannot be prevented. Brahmā can only counter the evil by giving predictions and boons to change things after a while. In the world of gods time is slow, and this "while" can last quite a long time on earth (see 3.3.3. below). So the MBh would come near to the Zoroastrian belief of the cosmic dualism in which the good and evil forces are forever fighting in the world. The creator-god (or the creator-author) sets the (story-)world into motion but cannot control the forces that move within it and exercise their own free will. In the MBh it is apparent that the morally good can by the force of their will act morally even in the moment of conflict and crisis, but the morally bad cannot.[897]

The structural position of "the Author" is clearer than the ontological, but still complex. Vyāsa operates on several narrative levels. In the fictional world of the MBh he is its concrete author and the person who narrated it first and in this way disseminated it. The first narration took place out of the sphere of the events in the main narrative, ostensibly somewhere in the Himalaya which is situated near the world of gods. Vyāsa is a narrated character inside both F(I) and F(II). In F(I) and F(II) he is also a narratee of his own composition (in the Janamejaya's snake sacrifice), and inside the frame of F(II) he is a third-level narrator of embedded tales. Because of his longevity he has been able to sire Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura and be still present in the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya, who is Pāṇḍu's great-great-grandson. He is the only person in the MBh to survive to "the present world", just as Janamejaya is the only survivor of the kingly line of the Kurus.

In the Diagram 11 below are shown the chains of transmission of the MBh from Vyāsa onwards (arrows down) and the descendants from Vyāsa onwards (arrows up), most of whom are protagonists of the MBh.

[897] There are problems in this view. The Pāṇḍavas and their allies are mainly on the good side and act morally, but in some occasions even Yudhiṣṭhira makes himself guilty of deviousness, e.g. when Droṇa is driven to despair by the false belief that his son is dead.

Diagram 11. Vyāsa (the Author) in the MBh

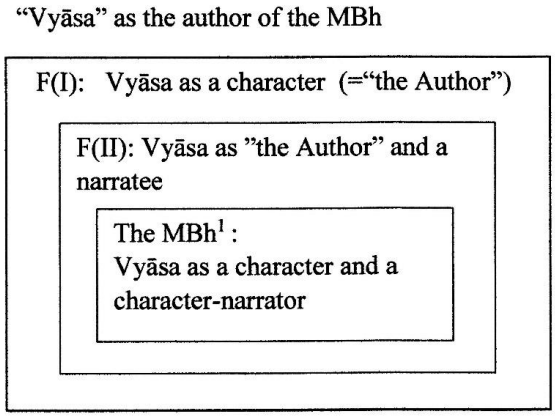


The characters outside the F(I) appear in the main narrative, the characters inside appear in the F(I), except Parikṣit who appears in both, although in F(I) only as a narrated character. He is the only grandson of the Pāṇḍava brothers who manages to be born after the war (as Kṛṣṇa revives him with a *satyakriyā*, a "truth-spell"), and when Yudhiṣṭhira resigns and leaves his kingdom with his brothers and Draupadī, Parikṣit, about twenty, is

crowned as the king. In the time of Janamejaya's snake sacrifice he is already dead, but his story is told in the F(I). Ugraśravas has heard the MBh both from his father and from Vaiśaṃpāyana. The link to Vaiśaṃpāyana is more important, as it connects the two outer frames.

The Diagram 12 shows Vyāsa in the different levels of narrative in the MBh. It is to be noted that he is a character who is singled out as "the Author" in the frame of F(II) but only a character "Vyāsa the seer" inside it ("the MBh[1]"). As a character, he narrates stories inside the F(II) but he does not narrate "the MBh". The question which of the various MBhs Vyāsa has authored is discussed in the next chapter.

Diagram 12. Vyāsa in the levels of the narrative in the MBh



In the Diagram 12 the "Vyāsa" which is outside the text is a projection created by the MBh, and therefore his name is inside quotation marks. He cannot be called the concrete author, he is a fictive author, but he appears on all the levels of the MBh, except in the fourth level (the embedded narratives of other character-narrators within the F(II)), as the diagram shows.

Why have the composers of the MBh wanted to create an author-figure like Vyāsa, who is so much present both in the frames and in the main plot and still declines to take the position of "The Narrator" and disappears behind the voices of Ugraśravas and

Vaiśaṃpāyana? If there would be no F(I), and the F(II) would begin in 1.57.1[898] and the rest ("the Vasu-version", see above p. 207 n. 725) would be taken to be "the MBh", the double identity would fade and Vyāsa would be reduced to one of the central characters of the MBh: a seer versed in the Vedas and yogic powers, a progenitor of the fathers of the heros and villains of the story and an omniscient counsellor to both, like the seer Nārada in "The story of Sāvitrī" and other tales outside the MBh. But who would be then this Vaiśaṃpāyana, who tells the tale: how would he be introduced? It is difficult to imagine F(II) without F(I), or something similar. In the Mbh it is almost obligatory to provide a back-story for a story, and F(I) is the back-story for both Vaiśaṃpāyana's position as a narrator and for the storytelling situation in F(II).

The F(I) and F(II) that establish Vyāsa as "the Author" are also important as an introductory preface to the main story. The tripartite structure, which in the beginning of the text forms a neat succession (see the Diagram 7b p. 206), seems integral to the structure of the whole work, as it is repeated in a reduced form also in the beginning of the embedded stories. To summarize, "Vyāsa" is perhaps an enigma as the author of his work, but his great role is elsewhere: he is a link to the Veda and its authority and wisdom, and one of the many devices that bring order, coherence and continuity to the MBh.

3.3.3. The boundaries of narrative and the narrative time

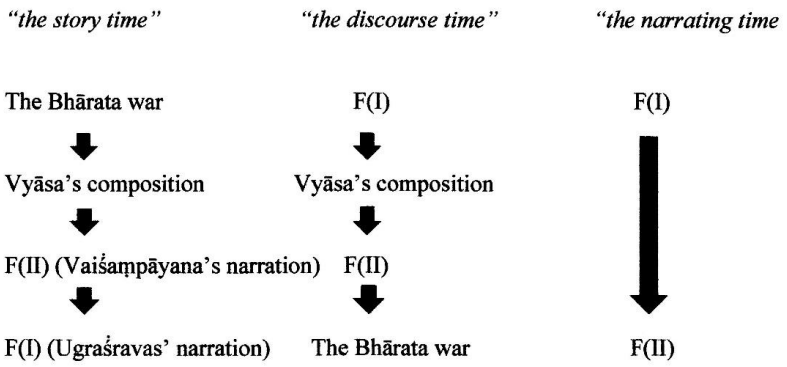
This chapter will discuss the "virtual framing" of the MBh, i.e. the boundaries of the work called "the MBh" which the text itself creates with its structure and the overlapping definitions of the work by its characters. The idea of different MBh:s within the one text raises also the question about how the text wants to have itself seen and whether this is different from what it appears to be in the eyes of a scholar. A related subject is narrative time within the MBh.

It is most convenient to begin with the last issue. Narrative time is basically divided to three areas according to the components of the narrative: "the story time" (= the course of the events in chronological order), "the discourse time" (= the course of the events as they are narrated) and "the narrating time" (= the time that the narrating act

[898] Plus, the mention in 1.57.75 to the MBh as Vyāsa's work should be taken as a later addition.

takes).[899] The Diagram 13 shows their distribution in the MBh. In the column of "the discourse time" the anticipatory summaries of F(I) have not been taken into account. The diagram illustrates the fact that both the F(I) and F(II) play essential part in structuring the narrative. Because of them, the chronology of the events that are narrated according to "story time" is turned backwards in the discourse, i.e. the narrated is presented as a flashback (analepsis) in relation to the narrating time.

Diagram 13. Narrative time in the MBh.



As has been seen in the preceding chapters, there are several layers of analeptic sections. If the F(I) is taken to represent the "now", the snake sacrifice of the F(II) would represent "the near past" (1-2 years before), the dynastic strife and the Bhārata war "the middle past" (50-80 years before)[900], the birth of Bhīṣma and Vyāsa "a distant past" 120-150 years before) and happenings like the churning of the ocean "the mythical past" ("the Eon of the Gods", see below). Looking at these points of time, the F(I) reaches very far into the past, as it contains following analepses (flashbacks): (i) the narration of how Ugraśravas listened to the MBh in the snake sacrifice (the near past), (ii) the summary of the MBh and the Bhārata war (the middle past), (iii) the backstories of F(II) (the middle, the distant and the mythical past). In the (iii), the stories of Parikṣit and the snake sacrifice

[899] For a full discussion of these concepts, see Scheffel et al (2014).
[900] The counting would begin from Janamejaya: he has been crowned when his father Parikṣit has died, being at least twenty, some years may have passed from this. Parikṣit would have been at least forty at his death. He is Arjuna's grandson and is born after the great battle and is crowned king when Yudhiṣṭhira retires and leaves the kingdom with others in the last book.

would belong to the middle past, the stories of Bhṛgu and Ruru to the distant past and the stories about the mother of snakes, Garuḍa and the churning of the ocean to the mythical past.

But as "the story time" in the MBh is not that of the real world but one of imagination and myths, especially the events of the middle and distant past are mingled. The preternaturally long life of Nārada, Śaunaka, Mārkaṇḍeya and other *ṛṣis* (seers) enables them to be actors in all of these pasts, as well as in the present and, in theory, also in the future. Vyāsa is an anomaly in this group, because he has been born fairly recently for a seer, being of the same age as Bhīṣma. Also other mythical persons like Bhārgava Rāma, who is present in the main narrative as a teacher of Bhīṣma, Droṇa and Karṇa, shorten the distance between the narrative present and the distant past, even mythical past, as does the participation of the gods and supernatural creatures in the plot: Arjuna meets Śiva and goes to the heaven of Indra, and spirits like rākṣasas, gandharvas and yakṣas inhabit the same forests as the protagonists of the main narrative. Already the narrative situations of F(I) and F(II), the impossibly long *sattra* of ageless, all-knowing seers and the surreal snake sacrifice of Janamejaya, set the tone: *all* the things that the MBh contains must have happened a very long time ago.[901]

The distant and near past are mixed by the text itself. In 1.14.5. the quarrel between the two sisters Kadrū and Vinatā is said to happen "long ago, in the Eon of the Gods", but when the snake Vāsuki holds the council of snakes, after having heard his mother's curse, Āstīka's father Jaratkāru has already been born so that Vāsuki can give his sister to him. And as Āstīka can rush as a young boy to Janamejaya's sacrifice, the mythological past, the distant past and the present are pushed very near each other.[902] The time is also bent by the various metalepses that were mentioned in the analysis of the F(I). Ruru wants to hear about the interruption of sacrifice by Āstīka who has not yet been born; Āstīka's later life and death is already known to Ugraśravas, who meets him at the snake sacrifice as a young boy; Bhīṣma tells a story about Janamejaya, son of Parikṣit, both yet to be born; Śuka departs from the world before or during the Bhārata war but is still present in Janamejaya's sacrifice.[903] The fact that Janamejaya rushes to prepare a

[901] The possible historical date of the Bhārata war is not dealt with here, as it has no relevance to the discussion.
[902] See p. 191, 197 above.
[903] Earl (2011: 78) also pays attention to the fact that the gods summon Ananta to pull up the mount Meru when they churn the ocean (1.16.6.) in the mythical past, but later, after the horse Uccaiḥśravas has been born from this ocean, the sisters wager on it and Kadrū curses her offspring, Śeṣa practices ascesis and

horse sacrifice in the middle of his snake sacrifice and before the books 14-18 have been recited to him, is another kind of anachronism, related to the discrepancy of timing between the interruption of the sacrifice and the narrating of the MBh.

Is it so that the composers of the MBh did not notice chronological dissonances? They may be relapses: in such a long text it is understandable that not every little detail has been checked. It is not probable that the stretching, compressing and overturning of time was done in purpose, to create a special effect, or plant a special, esoteric meaning into those instances. The composers were clearly fascinated with the possibilities of frames, successive narrators and narrative situation, and even with parallel worlds, but the metalepses in the MBh do not look like conscious attempts to experiment with time. Perhaps the composers did not care. Maybe we should also think that realistic chronology is not an issue when the borders of the narrated world are opened wide by the coexistence and interaction of mortal men and eternal seers, sprites and gods.

There is still another explanation. Here I again refer to the possibility of "paratactic aggregation"[904]. As in the case of "the double introduction" in the F(I), the composers of the MBh could have been faithful to two different traditions of narrative and wanted to preserve both. They may have believed that authenticity of tradition is more important than consistency.[905]

The bending of time in the two frames has the effect of both distancing the main narrative from the narrating present and drawing it nearer. The figure of Vyāsa, present in three levels of narrative, has the same effect. He is the instigator of conscious collapse of time and death when he summons those who have died in the Bhārata war to meet the survivors, and invites also Parikṣit to meet Janamejaya, and all the three levels of narrative (and time) flow together (15.36-43).

The boundaries of the work show the same fluidity as narrative time. First of all, the text itself presents two versions of "the MBh". The part which is narrated by Ugraśravas before Vaiśaṃpāyana starts his narration cannot be included in the latter. These are called the MBh^2 and the MBh^1 in the Diagram 7a (p. 206). The end of the MBh

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only then gets the boon from Brahmā to become Ananta (1.32.20-25). Here, like in the case of Śuka, the chronology of the events is reversed.

[904] See p. 171 n. 608; p. 209.

[905] This did not prevent the authors of the Epic age to reinterpret the material that was already codified in the Vedic texts. They were bothered by moral licence, too liberal attitude towards women and lower castes and disrespect towards the brahmans and the ancient seers that they found in the Vedic corpus. This resulted in retellings of narratives both in the MBh and in the *Bṛhaddevatā* that updated the social mores to correspond the more rigid society of the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era. See Patton 1996, esp. 441-452, and the chapter 3.6. below.

is also blurred. In the book 15, at the point where Janamejaya is able to meet his father, it becomes apparent that just before the resurrection scene Āstīka has interrupted the sacrifice. So one may infer that the rest of the narrative of Vaiśaṃpāyana takes place after the snake sacrifice. But in the very end, after Vaiśaṃpāyana has told how Yudhiṣṭhira attained heaven, and falls silent, and Ugraśravas appears to finish the long narrative, the sacrifice ends again, and Āstīka and others rejoice because the rest of the snakes has been saved (18.5.26-28). Here the narrative situation is reinvoked, just like the arrival of Ugraśravas in the Naimiṣa Forest the beginning. It is also baffling that the snake sacrifice is brought to end also in the book 1, in the tale of Āstīka (minor book 5), so that the narrative situation must be introduced again in the minor book 6. Indeed, MBh is full of repetitions.[906]

The text itself seems to give different opinions of the contents of the text. These opinions come in the F(I) and in the beginning of F(II). First there is the mention by Ugraśravas of three different versions in 1.1.50: some brahmans learn the MBh from Manu, i.e. from 1.1.30 onward, others from the tale of *The Book of Āstīka*, i.e. from minor book 5 onward, others from *The Tale of Uparicara* (Vasu), i.e. from minor book 6 and 1.57.1. onward. (This was the starting-point of the reconstruction of the "Ur-rahmen" of the MBh by Oberlies described in pp. 207-208.) The first ("Manu") and the last ("Vasu") seem to match roughly the MBh^2 and MBh^1. Ugraśravas refers also to a version which he has narrated "at Śaunaka's session", i.e. from the minor book 4 onward (1.2.30). Perhaps Śaunaka did not need the summaries and lists of contents, as the work was familiar for him, but why did he not care about the tale of Uttaṅka? Was he so proud of his family that he wanted to begin "his Bhārata" with stories about Bhṛgus?

Then there are the versions that Vyāsa has produced. Ugraśravas tells that first Vyāsa composed a version of 24 000 couplets, "without the minor narratives" (sub-stories), and this is called by the learned The *Bhārata* proper (1.1.61). Then he made a summary of it (1.1.62), which is, according to Ugraśravas, the Book of the List of Contents (the minor book 1, without the first part in which Ugraśravas tells about this composing and editing). This shorter version was taught first to Śuka and then to Vyāsa's other students[907], and transmitted by them to the gods and demi-gods (1.1.63-64). This is

[906] See Ramanujan 1991: 419-443.

[907] According to legend the five students made each their own versions, and the version we have is Vaiśaṃpāyana's. There is a later text called *Jaiminīya Aśvamedhikaparvan* (12^{th}-14^{th} century?), claiming to be a part of Jaimini's MBh, that is a retelling of the 14^{th} book of the MBh. It is a work of Vaiṣṇava

strange: one would think the the gods have all the time of the world to listen, unlike humans.

This is not all. When Vaiśaṃpāyana begins his narration, he says that the work contains 100 000 couplets (1.56.13.), roughly the number that the Vulgate Edition has. The book 12 returns to the magic number 100 000, but now the text is ”a learned treatise of *dharma*”, composed “Eons ago” by seven sages called Citraśikhandins (12.322.26) for king Vasu. This work appears to be connected with a version of the MBh that the god Brahmā has created, according to 12.59.29. It is said to have been composed as early as in the beginning of the cycle of *yugas*, when the Vedas and *dharma* were lost. Brahmā’s work was divinely huge, as it had 100 000 chapters (*adhyāya*).[908] (The Critical Edition has “only” 1995 chapters.) If these *dharma* books refer to the MBh, their existence (well before any of the protagonists of the main narrative had been born) makes the events of the MBh totally predestined, and the text something like a manuscript of a drama for the characters to plod through.[909] It also robs Vyāsa of his authorship by making the MBh either a work of some other seers or attributing it to the god Brahmā. This very early dating is in in par with the ideas of the *mīmāṃsakas* (see chapter 2.1.) who believed that the Veda was eternal and unhistorical.

The divine versions can be seen as an effort to establish the sacred authority and eternal status of the MBh. They are shadows behind shadows, so they are not included in the diagram 13 below. Also the “short version” of Vyāsa is a fiction: it only implies that there have been different opinions of the length of the MBh (but when and by whom, one really does not know). To return to the present text, the Critical Edition is 146 000 lines long, the Vulgate has well over 200 000 lines. Vyāsa may have taught this or some other version to Vaiśaṃpāyana so that Vaiśaṃpāyana could narrate it to Janamejaya. Vaiśaṃpāyana’s narrative in the snake sacrifice (the MBh[1]) did not contain the minor books 1-5, but the summaries and lists had been composed by Vyāsa (see above) and so they existed somewhere, and Ugraśravas could transmit these to the seers according to the first two minor books.

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bhakti (devotional tradition) and interesting as such, as it contains original stories and a version of the last book (*Uttarakaṇḍa*) of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

[908] Brahmā made four shorter versions of this gigantic work for various gods: one for Śiva (10 000 chapters), one for Indra (5000 chapters), one for Bṛhaspati (3000 chapters) and one for Kāvya Uśanas (1000 chapters) (MBh 12.59.86-91).

[909] A similar predestined narrative is present in the Book 1 of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as the god Brahmā gives the author Vālmīki a vision to the future so that he would be able to compose the complete history of Rāma.

As the Diagram 11 above in the chapter 3.3.2 indicates, Ugraśravas seems to have two sources for his narration (The MBh[2]). In the first introduction it is told that he has learnt the story from Vaiśaṃpayana in the snake sacrifice (1.1.5.), so this would be the MBh[1]. Later, in the second introduction, Śaunaka says that Lomaharṣana, the father of Ugraśravas, has learnt long ago "the entire stock of sacred Lore" and recited it to Śaunaka (1.4.1-3). Ugraśravas confirms that his father has indeed learnt the lore from Vaiśaṃpayana and "his successors" (who are they?), and Ugraśravas, too, has committed this same lore into his memory (1.5.5.). Of this he says: "The priests used to tell this ancient history, which Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana[910] once recounted to the sages that dwell in the Naimiṣa Forest. My father Lomaharṣana the Bard, Vyāsa's wise student, was once asked by the brahmins to tell it. Therefore I shall now relate it just as I have heard it from him on your demand, Śaunaka, this tale of Āstīka." (1.13.4-8).[911] What is the version that Lomaharṣana has learnt, and has he learnt it from Vaiśaṃpāyana or Vyāsa? How can a *sūta* be a student of Vyāsa? Anyhow, the father's story could not have included the tale of Āstīka, at least not the part that tells about Āstīka, because it is connected to the narrative situation of F(II) where Ugraśravas is told to be present, but not his father. And who has composed the tale of Āstīka, as its conclusive events take place only when the snake sacrifice (and Vaiśaṃpāyana's narrative = the Mbh[1]) ends? Has Vyāsa foreseen what will happen and taught his students a version of the MBh that contains also the story of its telling but forbidden Vaiśaṃpāyana to narrate this part?[912]

It is probably useless to try to find an explanation for each and every one of these mysteries. Put together, they tell that the MBh has loose borders, "fuzzy edges", as van Buitenen says[913]. Only in F(I) there are variant opinions of where one should begin and what comes first and who learnt what from whom, and many of these arise from "the double introduction". From 1.54 onward the narrative flows in one direction in a fairly consistent way. It is evident that there were more than one version of "the story of the transmission of the MBh" and it was hard to choose which one was the right one. The loose borders give evidence of the way the composers thought about their material, evidence of work in progress, and they are valuable for the scholar because of this.

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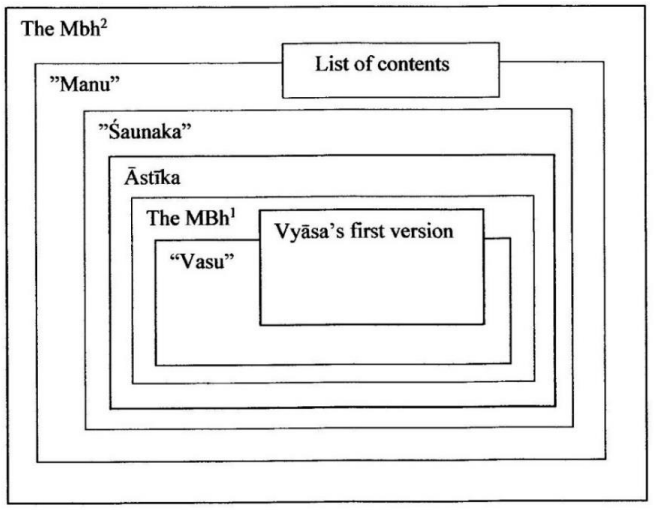
[910] Vyāsa.
[911] At this point of the narrative, after Śaunaka has emphatically asked to hear the story of Āstīka, it is natural that Ugraśravas refers only to it. It does not mean that this was the only part of the MBh that his father had told to before to the brahmans. It is just the part that he probably had not told (see above).
[912] As noted before, both Śaunaka and Ugraśravas say in 1.53.31-33 that Vyāsa has recited the MBh in the intervals of the snake sacrifice, not Vaiśaṃpāyana.
[913] van Buitenen 1973: xvi-xix.

Probably the text of the MBh was fixed before its composition had been wholly completed.

This may be interpreted as adherence to the generic-analytic school of the Mbh studies which many scholars dismiss as outdated. Yes, and no. In this study the text of the MBh has been treated as a whole and the aim has been to concentrate to what we have, not to speculate about what we have not, i.e. the Ur-Text or a version that had only the "heroic core narrative". One must stop to the point where there is no firm evidence. But it is equally misjudged to labour to interpret every detail of the MBh so that it would match a philosophical or esoteric scheme that is supposed to be implanted everywhere in the text. As said before, this leads to overinterpretation and misinterpretation. Most of all it curtails the possibilities of free research. It is more fruitful to inspect this huge text as a telescope to look into the creative mind of the literate class of the Epic age. That which has been left unfinished, rough and loose tells as much as that which is cleaned, integrated and polished. Most of all it is important to remember that the MBh is a literary text and full of most fascinating narratives, and it should be respected and studied as such, even though it claims to be the fifth Veda and a compendium of every kind of wisdom — this is advertizing and PR in the Epic age — and even though it at times forcefully propagates Vaiṣṇava mysticism and *dharma*.

Diagram 14. Various *Mahābhāratas*



Indeed, the text is quite assured about its position in the literary and ideological canon. Before Ugraśravas begins his narrative, the seers proclaim that they want to hear "the sacred story" told in "divine language" which is "supported by all sciences" and joining the four Vedas (as the fifth)[914]. A little later Ugraśravas confirms that Vyāsa's story is "the holy Upaniṣad", and hearing only a quarter of couplet of it and believe in it purifies one of all one's sins. The essence of these eulogies is that this text is packed with the holy wisdom of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, theology of Kṛṣṇa and the mystic knowledge of best philosophies. Ugraśravas does not hesitate to claim that the MBh is even more holy than the Veda.[915]

It is clear from all this gushing that the composers of the MBh knew that they had created something new and unique. Nevertheless they wanted to bind their work to the Vedic tradition. But were they so enamoured in Vedic rituals that they copied the structure of their work from them?

3.4. The origin of the frames in the MBh

This chapter will complete the discussion that was started in 2.4. After having inspected the frames, embeddings, narrators and narrative situations of the MBh, it is time to check whether they really could have clear parallels in Vedic rituals. It is also necessary to return to the theories of Christopher Minkowski, who in his articles has formulated the most coherent hypothesis about the ritual origin of the frame and claimed that the evidence for this is to be found in the MBh. Others have not gone to the evidence in deep but only quoted him and taken his argument as settled. So, again, what is this argument, and how would the structure of the MBh support it?

Minkowski claims that "Vedic rituals, especially *sattras,* are composed following an analogous technique [to the framing of the MBh]."[916] According to him, this is proved by the fact that the structure of rituals (= the supposed model) is guided by

[914] Other works have also claimed to be "fifth Vedas", e.g. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* (the handbook of dramaturgy) and the *Purāṇas*.
[915] "Once the divine seers foregathered, and on one scale they hung the four Vedas in the balance, and on the other scale *The Bhārata*; and both in size and in weight it was the heavier. Therefore, because of its size and its weight it is called *The Mahābhārata*..." (1.1.208-209, van Buitenen's translation).
[916] Minkowski 1989: 417.

hierarchy, symmetry and ritual "episodes"[917]. The hierarchy means that the rituals include bigger units that may include smaller units. So "smaller rites *can be said to be embedded* into the larger rite"[918] (my italics). To prove the symmetry (comparable to the frames of the MBh) Minkowski gives the structure of an *iṣṭi*, the type of ritual that is the basis of Vedic New and Full Moon rites. He interprets it as two sets of actions that envelop the main action and have symmetric correspondence with each other.[919] He refers to the studies of Fritz Staal, who describes an *iṣṭi* like this: "An *iṣṭi* is preceded, accompanied and followed by numerous accessory rites, but its basic structure consists of a brief series of acts that follow each other in rapid succession. The subdivision of these acts into elements is fixed but their numbering and grouping together is to some extent arbitrary."[920]

Here is a basic scheme of an *iṣṭi* given by Staal. Like Minkowski, he refers to the parts of the ritual as "episodes" and "elements".

Episode I.
Element 1. The Adhvaryu commands the Hotā to address the deity, e.g. Agni, by saying: "Address Agni!"
Element 2. The Hotā addresses or invites Agni by reciting verses from the Ṛgveda.
Episode II.
Element 3. The Adhvaryu exclaims to the Agnīdh: "Make (him) hear!"
Element 4. The Agnīdh shouts: "Make (him) hear!"
Episode III.
Element 5. The Adhvaryu commands the Hotā to recite his main recitation, the *yājyā* (offering verse), by saying: "Say the *yājya* for Agni!"
Element 6. The Hotā begins the *yājyā* by murmuring: "Earth! Air! We who say the *yājyā*... " and the recites verses from the Ṛgveda, ending with the exclamation: "May (Agni) lead (the offerings to the gods)!" At the last syllable, which the Hotā shouts at the top of his voice, the Adhvaryu makes the offering by throwing or pouring into the fire, and the Yajamāna[921] pronounces his "renunciation": "This is for Agni, this is not for me!"[922]

The basic *soma* ritual is more complicated. According to Staal, it has four "episodes": I. Chant (by three chanters) with four ritual "elements" (actions); II. Recitation (by three

[917] The apostrophes around the word episodes are by Minkowski.
[918] Minkowski 1989: 418.
[919] Minkowski 1989: 418-419.
[920] Staal 1996 (1990): 79.
[921] A *yajamāna* is the lay person who pays for the ritual to the priests and gets its "fruit" (profit).
[922] Staal 1996 (1990): 79-80. Further on Staal concludes that there are many different *iṣṭis* with the same basic structure but different names and variable details, and several of them may be put inside larger units where they follow each other in sequence.

priests with the *yajamāna*) with 5 "elements"; III. *Soma* offering (the offering, the offering verse, the exclamation, like in the *iṣṭi*); IV. *Soma* drinking, with four "elements".[923] Staal brings up also *sattras*. He is of the opinion that they are most adaptable to additions. They may precede or follow the original rites and form a "recursive" pattern around the original rite.[924]

These examples show that Vedic rituals contain smaller units and sections which may be used independently and put inside other rituals (like the *iṣṭi*), and made longer by adding rituals around the central rite. But rituals must have *some* structure and logic to be established and repeated. The division to "episodes" and "elements" is compulsory in any kind of rite (or ritualized action, such as a military parade) that is performed regularly. Not only in India but in other cultures rituals have developed by adding new parts to the older system or combining different rituals. After all, there are few alternatives for how combinations of things can be made: basically, the parts may follow each other in a parallel row (parataxis) or, if they are small and simple, they can be put inside or under a larger entity (inclusion, subordination).

Adding, inserting and subordinating are by no means are restricted to rituals. They govern many systems. It "can be said"[925] that one's daily schedule is a frame which consists of episodes which have smaller elements that contain even smaller elements.[926] The day and the year have their own "framing structures": the day is framed by the night, or vice versa, and it has a centre (the high noon) that is framed by the morning and the afternoon, the year is divided into months and the months are divided into fortnights or weeks, and these further into days, so one could take a lunar or solar calendar as a model of a frame narrative. So much depends on the words that are chosen to describe something. The right words can make the hypothesis sound true before there is any proof of it. If one wishes to deconstruct the world, everything is framed by something and everything is embedded in something. Literary embedding, as has been seen throughout this study, is a more complex device than just "something small" being put inside

[923] Staal 1996 (1990): 81-83.
[924] Both Minkowski and Hegarty (2015, see below) refer to Staal in their hypotheses about the ritual. Staal is not the most reliable guide to the ritual structures. He is prone to generalizations and he adopts liberally (and without explaining why) terms and concepts from other disciplines: this creates similarities and connections between things that may not be related, at least not integrally. His way of description and the choice of words make the ritual seem much more akin to drama than it really is.
[925] See n. 848 below.
[926] E. g. "Episode I, morning toilet", consists of subordinated "elements" 1-4: washing the teeth, having a shower, combing the hair, applying makeup.

"something big". [927] If the model would have been taken outside literature, everyday models like the ones mentioned above would have been much nearer and clearer than those of the rituals.

To go back to the ritual, the dialogue of the priests that was quoted above does not resemble the narrative situation that is typical of the MBh. The ritual dialogue is not really interactive: it consists, in addition to Vedic *mantras*, of short fixed commands to do something, or repeat a *mantra*, that are then mechanically obeyed. As demonstrated in the chapter 3.3.1. above – especially by the analysis of Śaunaka's series of analytic inquiries in pp. 231-233 – , the ritual "conversation" is a far cry from the dialogue in the MBh. In the epic the questions of the narratee (which according to Minkowski are copied from the "command" of the ritual)[928] are of a different order. They serve many different purposes. They ask for a tale or demand a clarification ("Why this and this happened?" ... "Tell me (more) about..."), they repeat what has been said in other words, or introduce a new subject by summarizing it. In all these ways they guide and regulate the flow of narrative. Often they lead to digressions that resemble the random movements of freely associating mind. In the ritual the commands do not alter the direction of the sacrifice at all: there are no digressions, no summaries, no back-stories, no opening of a window into a another textual level, except by the reciting of *mantras* — the point of which, in the actual ritual, is not their content or semantic connection to their context but their sacred power, so they are not proper literary or textual units in them.

Digressions, backstories, changes of textual level all are essential in the dialogue of the MBh. The questions are complex means of structuring the narrative, not orders or commands, and this makes them interactive. The narrator may begin often with "I will tell about..." before he introduces the subject. The initiating words can be repetitive, but repetition, as we have seen, is part of the narrative strategy of the MBh and the necessary armament of oral epics. [929] Besides, in the chapter 3.3.1. it was explained what the origin of the frame dialogue of the MBh is. It is not found in the rigid ritual diction. The "tell

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[927] Again, I refer here to the article of Wolf (2006b) which shows the many contexts which can be interpreted as framing.

[928] Minkowski 1989: 419. He also suggests that the model for the storyteller could be the head priest, because both direct a complicated action. This does not need comment. - What Minkowski proves, in fact, is that the dialogue in the MBh is formulaic (as it is common in epic literature) but complicated, whereas the dialogue in the rituals is not. As said above, the resemblance is trivial: any other dialogue would fit it.

[929] The verb *kathaya-* ("to tell (a story)"), derived from the interrogative *katham* "how?", is used very often in the MBh and this contributed to its wide use in the later narrative literature. - The formulaic expressions connected with narrative acts in the MBh fit well the oral-formulaic theory of oral epics. They do not need ritual explanation.

me...” /”tell more about...” formula is typical for children and other narratees in a real-life storytelling situation. The storyteller is constantly interrupted by questions that demand explanation, clarification and amplification. An early audience which knew the rudiments of the plot and loved it would very likely interrupt and ask the narrator to tell more about their favourite episode or character. In the Mbh the “evocation of orality” by “pseudo-oral discourse”[930] is used as a conscious literary strategy. The survival of the dialogue form might well be a marker that reveals how a narrative generated other narratives.[931]

Together with oral storytelling, the conversative frame of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the philosophical disputes of the *Upaniṣads* (see 2.6.) are obvious models to the narrative situations of the MBh. Their influence can be seen in the discussions of Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira (the guru and the disciple) in the frame of the books 12 and 13. To return to the findings of the part 2, the fact is that before the simple Vedic rituals were made more elaborate, the procedures of embedding and framing had already been in practice in the literature in the Vedic literature, in which there are, as we have seen, enough examples of units added around a central section.

Now we come to the most important question: why are *sattras* present in the F(I) and F(II)? The similarity to frame narratives is very superficial.[932] The “episodes” and “elements” are not connected and do not build up an coherent meaning, message or plot in the same way as episodes and elements in a literary narrative. The subordination is mechanical: there is a basic type of offering act that can be used in many rituals, often with a modified content caused by a combination (as in the adding of the *pravargya* to the *soma* sacrifice). But the *meaning* of this combination, as was seen in the narrative of Cyavana in 2.3.1, had to be created by a narrative, and it was created by literary means. The meaning and self-referentiality are present in the text, not in the ritual. The need to combine came from the ritual, but the model for the act of combining texts came from Vedic literary tradition.

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[930] Fludernik 2009: 65. Of everyday narration Fludernik says: “To keep audience’s interest, natural narrative is often repetitious and interlaced with verbatim dialogue by the participants [...] (67). She also reminds of the fact that imitation of oral storytelling (via “institutionalized storytelling”) is a widespread phenomenon in literary works all over the world (65). Fludernik started her career as a scholar of medieval literature, so her remarks are most relevant for this discussion.

[931] See Mangels 1994: 16-17, as well as the early studies of Söhnen (1979), and Bailey (1986) for the dialogues in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Purāṇas* respectively.

[932] One has the feeling that Minkowski is aware of this, as his words when giving the evidence reflect uncertainty (“an analog, possibly a source...”; “can be said to be embedded...”, “a kind of embedding...”, “so to speak, form the frame...”, “bear some resemblance...”).

If we look at the "staging", i.e. the outlook and setting of the F(I) and F(II), it is certain that they were inspired by the description of the mythical *sattras* in the *Jaiminīya* and *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇas*. First of all there is the length, combined with suitable occasion to tell a story. The story of Śunaḥśepa was narrated to the king in the *rājasūya* ritual, as seen in the chapter 2.3.2. above, and it is almost certain that long rituals had pauses during which suitable stories were told. As said above in the chapter 3.3.1., only an immensely long *sattra* of twelve years would provide the opportunity to narrate an immensely long tale such as the MBh, and this idea was used to create the narrative situation of F(I).

There was also something else in the *sattras* that interested the composers of the MBh. Not their "symmetry", but their special dramatic nature. This is made clear in literature that describes them. Here I will quote Reich (2001).

Sattras are often offered not by a single sacrificer (*yajamāna*) but by group of Brahmans, who are all equally *yajamānas* in the sense that they all undergo the consecration (*Dikṣā*) and all share the fruits of the sacrifice. The joint sacrificers officiate for themselves, and, consequently, there are no gifts for the priests (*dakṣinās*). Despite this apparent egalitarian quality of the rite, one of the participants is singled out to have special role and is called the *gṛhapati*.[933] The *Jaiminīya Śrautasūtra* also emphasizes that all participants in a *sattra* must be followers of the same sacrificial tradition "lest disagreement should arise among them about the performance of the rite." It seems that the warning was necessary precisely because there was a tendency for such disagreements to erupt in *sattra* contexts. Both the Naimiṣa forest and the Khāṇḍava tract are often mentioned in Vedic literature as sites of *sattras*. There seems actually to have been a circle of ritualists, the "Naimiṣīyas," who practiced sattras in the Naimiṣa forest. This is more or less what the classical texts tell us about *sattras*.[934]

After this she brings up the most interesting fact about *sattras*.

Critical research suggests, however, that the *sattra* form is historically connected with agonistic strands of the sacrificial tradition that have been obscured in the classical texts. In particular, it shares many features with the older *vrātya*[935] cult. Fragments of practices that point to such a connection are quite common in

[933] Śaunaka is the *kulapati* of the seers of the Naimiṣa Forest. The two titles may refer to same position.
[934] Reich 2001: 147.
[935] *Vrātyas* were a group of young men who were "violent outsiders" of the Vedic society but also experts in some rituals. These unruly groups, their backgound and their culture is of great interest: the best studies are by Falk (1986, 2002). The rites of the *vrātyas* included a game of dice which binds it both to the *rājasūya* and to the central gambling scenes of the *Sabhāparvan* and the narrative of Nala inside the *Āraṇyakaparvan* (where Nala is under the magic power of Kali). See Reich 2001: 148; Hiltebeitel 2001a: 132-139.

the classical accounts of *sattras*. For example, on the penultimate day of a classical *sattra*, a rite called the *Mahāvrata* should be performed.[936]

A *mahāvrata* was a "transgressive" ritual that included a chariot race, a game of arrow shooting (cf. the *svayaṃvara* of Draupadī), a tug of war between a person of high status and a person of low status and an obscene dialogue between a man and a woman who have sex afterwards. The *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* requires also an agonistic dialogue between one who eulogizes the participants of the rite and one who reviles them.[937] Reich quotes also the story of the *sattra* of Sthūra in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (2.297-299). In this narrative the violence and disruption inherent in the *sattra* are visible.

[...] while engaging in a *sattra*, Sthūra and his companions were surrounded by a hostile band, defeated and plundered, and Sthūra himself was killed. While the survivors mourned their dead leader, one of them had a vision of Sthūra rising up to heaven."[938]

These descriptions illuminate what made the composers of the MBh implant the *sattras* inside their narrative. They were inspired by their violence. The *sattra* was a perfect metaphor for the violence of the Bhārata war in the main narrative and for the snake sacrifice of Janamejaya in the F(II). Both are "transgressive" and unnatural and break against *dharma*. Janamejaya's *sattra* is not a decent Vedic ritual. It is an abomination, and therefore a suitable frame to a story of an abominable war that would suppress the violence of the warrior class and prove the necessity of *ahiṃsā* and *dharma*.

Thus the *sattra* is present in the MBh as a grand metaphor, not because of its ritual structure. In the F(I) it is not described in detail, but presented in a general fairytale fashion, so that the only thing that we learn is that it is very, very long. The description of the *sarpasattra* of F(II) shows only the black-magic exterior and the killing of the snakes by throwing them into the pyre. The *rājasūya* of the book 2 and the *aśvamedha* (horse sacrifice) which Yudhiṣṭhira arranges in the book 14 get attention, but also in these sections the details (and structures) of the ritual are completely passed by. The emphasis is on the spectacle and receiving of the guests. The *aśvamedha* gives reason to tell about

[936] Reich 2001: 147-148. She quotes here Heesterman (1993: 175-182) who has studied various undercurrents of the rituals. According to Heesterman The MBh tells how the old violent culture and its sacrifice is necessarily destroyed by itself and the new age of dharma.
[937] Reich 2001: 147-148.
[938] Reich 2001:148.

the adventures of Arjuna as he tours around with the horse, and to describe the lavish celebrations that surround the coronation of Yudhiṣṭhira.[939]

To sum up, it is evident that the *sattra* was chosen as the narrative setting of the outer frames *not* because it provided a model for symmetrical narrative structure, but because of (i) the mythical 12-year *sattra* presented in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*[940] was long enough to give space for the telling of the whole massive epic, (ii) the agonistic and violent associations of the *sattra* could be milked to make a meaningful connection to the main narrative, and (iii) the concept of *sarpasattra*, "a snaky sacrifice" which was performed by snakes themselves in the ritual handbooks (being thus even more fantastic as the 12-year *sattra*), gave the idea for a more realistic *sarpasattra* in which snakes would be sacrificed.[941] And finally, comparing the intricate, intertwined, organically twirling and multiplying structure of the MBh to a fixed ritual matrix is a grave insult to its literary pedigree and literary worth.

But mechanical models are more attractive than literary models in a technological age. More recently James Hegarty has, in his work on the MBh (2012) embraced the ritual model so wholeheartedly that he essays to read the Epic by transposing "recursive Vedic ritual to narrative form" and claims that this is a real breakthrough. First he describes the structure of *sattra* as symmetrical sequence (ABA, AABAA, AAABAAA etc. where other units are added to a central unit) and claims then that his "structural analysis" of e.g. *Droṇaparvan* of the MBh reveals that the framing comes from *sattra*. This "analysis" is not very analytic: it consists of stating the obvious fact that the narrative contains embeddings of fifth or sixth level[942] and claiming that this structure is the same as in *sattra*.[943] But the AABAA etc. structure is (a) not an accurate description of a *sattra* but an interpretation made only to forge an analogy to the literary forms, and (b) also present in the *omphalos* hymns of the *Ṛgveda* (see chapter 2.2.1. above) which certainly were not composed using the *sattra* as a model. And in the MBh,

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[939] See chapters 2.4. and 3.2.1.
[940] The *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 25.6.
[941] As Minkowski has shown, the ritual text on the *sarpasattra* also gave the Epic some of the names of the protagonists (1989: 413-415). But these influences (names, length, transgressiveness and connection to *vrātyas*) do not implicate that anything else should have been copied from the rituals. The frame story needed no model, because there was already one provided by the framing in the Vedic texts.
[942] In his description they form similar symmetrical combinations of letters as the *sattra*: P, SPS, NSPSN etc. Of course they can be described this way, but formalized sequences of units do not prove anything as such, because very many things can be described with similar sequences — if one does not care about the *content* of and *relations* between the units.
[943] Hegarty 2012: 51-58. Those parts of Hegarty's work that deal with the historical and cultural context of the MBh are much more enlightening than his literary and religio-philosophical hypotheses.

it has to be emphasized again, the narrative levels are used in so varied and complicated way — *textually* complicated way — that there is no reason to think that the model would come from rituals, where creative licence, playfulness and variance are not tolerated.

3.5. Other frame narratives of the Epic age

For the Epic age — and also for this dissertation — the main subject for analysis and discussion has been the MBh. The reasons are obvious: it contains the richest and most illuminating examples of framing and embedding in India (and maybe in the whole literary history), and it also had to be investigated in more detail to defend the central hypothesis of this study. Nevertheless it is necessary to give some attention to other notable works that belong to the same period and use framing techniques.

Three texts have been chosen for a concise analysis of structures and the use of frames. These are the second Sanskrit Epic of this era, the *Rāmāyaṇa* (3.5.1.): the collection of Buddhist *Jātakas* (3.5.2.); and the *Bṛhaddevatā*, a compendium of Vedic myths that are mentioned in *mantras* used in rituals (3.5.3.). These, to my opinion, serve best as a comparison to the MBh. They are either "firsts" in some way (The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Jātakas*) or hark back to a long tradition (the *Bṛhaddevatā*). They relate to the questions that I have discussed, bring up some new ideas, and illustrate different genres in which the frame flourished after it had been established. In the beginning of the classical age frame structures are found, in addition to the *itihāsa* genre that the MBh represents,[944] in "high" literature (*kāvya*), story literature (*kathā*, *ākhyāna*) and scholarly exposition (*śāstra*), i.e. in most literary genres.

[944] In the Introduction (p. 8 n. 3; p. 10 n. 14) I have explained the logic behind the choice of the material for the study. I repeat some of them shortly here. Why have I left out some works that are chronologically or thematically related to the MBh? First, the *Harivaṃśa*: it is both an appendix to the MBh and an independent work. It has the same narrator and narratee as the F(II) of MBh and the same question-answer structure. Many of its stories appear also in the MBh. As it is a huge text, it would need a long discussion which, however, would not add anything new to the study. The *Purāṇas* are left out for the same reasons. Even though they are good examples of the monumental *itihāsa* or *itihāsa-purāṇa* genre, for the purposes of this study they are nevertheless off the focus. I have wanted to trace the roots and the evolvement of the frame structure and stop at the point in which it is firmly established (= the MBh). I have also wanted to keep the number of the pages within reasonable limits. I could have included a discussion of one of the *Purāṇas* to complement the three examples I have chosen, but as there already exists a thorough structural analysis of the frames in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* by Söhnen-Thieme (2016), to which one can add her earlier study on frames in the *Harivaṃśa* and in the *Brahma Purāṇa* (Söhnen-

3.5.1. The Rāmāyaṇa

The Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* (from hence the Rām°) is a more compact text than the MBh. In its present form it has 24 000 couplets in 7 books (*kāṇḍa*). These are divided into chapters (*sarga*)[945]. There are much less subtales and minor episodes around the main narrative than in the MBh. The books 1 and 7 contain an outer frame narrative which in some respects resembles the outer frames of the MBh, but which also shows discrepancies that are not present in the MBh. The book 1 (*Bālakāṇḍa*) tells how the seer Vālmīki, the putative author of the work, set himself to compose the epic and how he taught it to his two students, who then passed it on to people. Together with the book 7 (*Uttarakāṇḍa*) it also tells how the epic was first performed to its protagonist Rāma. In the book 1 the recitation of the epic begins, and the childhood and youth of the main character is described. The book 7 establishes again the narrative situation, but the continuity of the "frame plot" is broken, which shows that these two parts have a different origin. There are nevertheless other frames, mostly in the book 1, which are better constructed. Probably their composer had the model of the MBh in mind.

The common opinion about the Rāmº is that the books 1 and 7 have been added later than the other parts, and of these two the book 7 is later. There are also several layers in the books 2-6 ("the core"). In relation to the MBh, the Rāmº is chronologically "in the middle". According to the dating accepted by most scholars, the early (oral) form of the work (ca. 5th - 4th century BCE) is later that that of the MBh,[946] but as a fixed (written) whole (ca. 1st - 3rd centuries CE) it is earlier than "the complete and fixed MBh" (ca. 4th - 6th centuries CE). [947] Compared to MBh, it shows no connection to the *sāṃkhya-yoga* philosophy or the cult of Nārāyaṇa, and also its connection to Vedic culture is weak,

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Thieme 2005), the best I can do here is to refer to them and bring some of their points up in the chapter 4 below. I have also left out the *Pañcatantra*, except for two examples. The development of the frame in the Classical age needs a separate discussion.

[945] One *sarga* contains approximately 25 stanzas.

[946] See the scheme of the stages of the composition of the Rām° in J. L. Brockington 1984: 45-61; 329; M. Brockington 1999: 120. Goldman (1984: 14-29) dates the early phase as far back as the 6th century BCE.

[947] See e.g. M. Brockington 1999: 99-110; 111-120. Hiltebeitel is of the opinion that the first and the last books belong to the original version of the work and the divinization of Rāma is also an original feature (see e.g. Hiltebeitel 2005: 460). This would put the first stage of the work much later than the usual dating.

except by the inclusion of Vedic seers and the horse sacrifice. It shows connection to a different area than the MBh (further east) and a different culture. It was early recognized as the first literary "court epic", *ādikāvya*,[948] whereas the MBh was categorized by early commentators as "tradition" or "history" (*itihāsa*). In regard to the chronology presented above, the outer frame (books 1 and 7) has appeared only when the Rāmº has taken a written form.

Much has been written about the relation of the Rāmº to the story of Rāma in the *Āraṇyakaparvan* of the MBh.[949] Most scholars specialized in the Rām°, e .g. J. L. and M. Brockington, are convinced that the MBh borrowed the story from the Rāmº.[950] Hiltebeitel, because of his view of the genesis of both epics, believes that the Rāma story in the MBh was the model for the Rāmº.[951] His argument is based, among other things, on the presence of the frame of the Rāmº. This indeed could be have been influenced by the frames of the MBh (see below). For others this feature is an additional proof of the frame being the last part that was added to the Rāmº. Thus, the general opinion is that the MBh borrowed first the core story from the (oral form of the) Rāmº and then the Rāmº borrowed the idea of frame structure from the (fixed form of the) MBh. This makes the Rāmº an interesting work in regard to the history of the frame. Another parallel narrative to the Rām° is the *Dasarathajātaka* (no. 461) which is nevertheless later than the core of the Rām°.[952]

This core (books 2-6) is consciously literary and shows most of the features of *kāvya* listed e.g. by the work of poetics by Daṇḍin[953]: it uses poetical language and metres skillfully, shows suitable emotions and aesthetic moods (*rasa*)[954] and includes long and elaborate descriptions of the beauty of nature and cityscape and also fantastic or horrific supernatural creatures and happenings. These are typical of courtly literature of the Classical age, but appear only at times in the MBh. E.g. in the core story the depiction of

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[948] *Ādi* "the beginning" plus *kāvya* "work of high literature".
[949] See J. L. Brockington 1975: 79-81.
[950] The reasons are given in J. L. Brockington 1978 and 1999.
[951] The basic idea of Hiltebeitel's work on the epics is that they should not be viewed and analysed predominantly as products of historical development and interpolation, but as finished products. This requires quite narrow "windows" for the dates for both of them. Thus, as the "whole of the MBh" is thought to be earlier than "the whole of the Rāmº", it is evident that the latter has borrowed from the first. See Hiltebeitel 2005: 503-504. Cf. also Goldman 1984: 29-39, which deals with the sources of the Rām°.
[952] It concentrates on Rāma's exile in the forest as a proof of his steadfastness; most other motifs are cut off, so that there is no abduction of Sītā, fight with Rāvaṇa etc.
[953] Daṇḍin, *Kāvyadarśa* 12-19. Daṇḍin's treatise of literary style was composed in the 6th or 7th century CE.
[954] See p. 15; p. 37 n. 170.

the battle is stylized and baroque compared with the rough realism of the MBh. The MBh introduces the narrators and speakers with *extra metrum* phrase (*Vaiśaṃpāyana uvāca*, "V. said"), whereas the Rām° incorporates the information about the speaker in the verse. This too has been regarded as a modern and literary feature in the Rām°.[955] A further proof of the lateness of the frame is the style: especially the book 7 comes near to the style of exposition in the *Purāṇas*.[956]

Let us first have a short look at the plot of the whole epic. The *Bālakāṇḍa* ("The Book of Youth") tells about the origin of the work and its first performance (*sargas* 1-4) and then, as a separate narrative, about the birth of prince Rāma and his three brothers, the youthful adventures of the hero with the seer Viśvāmitra[957] and his marriage to Sītā, the daughter of king Janaka of Videha (*sargas* 5-76) .[958] In the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* ("The Book of Ayodhyā" (2)) the subject is court intrigue: the king Daśaratha, Rāma's father, has to banish Rāma into the forest, because he has to keep his promise to his minor wife Kaikeyī, who wants her own son Bharata to be the successor. The *Āraṇyakakāṇḍa* ("The Book of Forest" (3)) describes how Rāma, his other brother Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā live in the Daṇḍaka Forest. There are heroic episodes that look like embedded narratives: e.g. Rāma kills rākṣasas (demons) and his brother mutilates a female demon. The demoness happens to be the sister of Rāvaṇa, the mighty demon king of the island of Laṅkā. Rāvaṇa plans a ruse, kidnaps Sītā and brings her to his island. In the core story this is the central event which launches the main action.

The *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* (The Book of Kiṣkindhā" (4)) is set mostly in the city of this name, from which the monkey king Sugrīva has been ousted out by his brother Vālin. While following the tracks of Sītā Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa meet Sugrīva's minister Hanuman and help to kill the usurper. After this the monkeys come to Rāma's aid: they hear that Sītā is kept in Laṅkā, and Hanuman says he will leap to the island[959] to spy. The *Sundarakaṇḍa* ("The Beautiful Book" (5)) tells about the wonders of the island and the adventures of Hanuman. After negotiating with Sītā he is caught, but he escapes and sets fire to the city with his tail. In the *Yuddhakaṇḍa* ("The Book of the Battle" (6)) the monkeys build a bridge to Laṅkā and after a long battle Rāvaṇa is killed and Sītā rescued.

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[955] See e.g. Goldman 1984: 16-18.
[956] Söhnen-Thieme 1998a: 115-116, 118.
[957] The royal seer Viśvāmitra has appeared in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa (see 2.3.3).
[958] Janaka features as a wise king in the *Upaniṣads* (see pp. 155-156).
[959] Hanuman is the son of the wind god Vāyu and has magical powers, so he can leap over the strait.

However, she has to take an ordeal of fire to prove that she has been faithful during her captivity.

This is the end of the main narrative. The *Uttarakaṇḍa* (The Last Book" (7)) returns to the court of Rāma. Some time has passed and in spite of the ordeal of the book 6, Rāma sends Sītā away to appease his people who do not believe in her chastity. Vālmīki takes her to his hermitage, where she gives birth to the twins Kuśa and Lava. Years later Vālmīki brings the twins to Rāma's horse sacrifice, so that they can recite the Rām° to their father. After hearing a part of the epic Rāma wishes to see Sītā. First Vālmīki arrives to swear on the veracity of Sītā, and then she herself appears to swear once again the same thing, after which she disappears into the lap of Dhāranī, the Earth mother.[960] After a reign of 11 000 years Rāma dies along with his brothers and goes to the heaven to be the god Viṣṇu.[961]

The plot has similarities with the main narrative of the MBh[962]. The narrative part include the youth of the heroes, a court intrigue, an exile in the forest and a great battle, although Rāma does not fight against his relatives. The tragedy arises from the rift between his sense of a king's duty (*rājadharma*) and his love for his wife and his brothers.[963] There is the author Vālmīki, whose ownership to the text is affirmed in the outer frame (1.1-3) like that of Vyāsa to the MBh in F(I). But unlike Vyāsa, Vālmīki is not a character in the main narrative (books 2-6) Vālmīki is a seer, but he shows more human traits than Vyāsa: he appears in the outer frame as a character that *acts* and is not only talked about, i.e. he is shown in the act of inspiration and composition of the Rāmº,. So, it is even possible that someone called Vālmīki has composed the core of the epic.[964]

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[960] According to the Book 1 Sītā is not an ordinary woman: she has been born from the field when the king Janaka ploughed it (her name means "furrow"), and she was then adopted by the king. Rāma's repeated dismissals, justified by common good and the *dharma* of the king, make Sītā a tragic figure, in spite of the fact that in the fairy-tale context of her birth she seems an otherwordly creature that is only a visitor in Rāma's earthly life. It would be essential to keep Rāma human to make his side of the story as tragic as Sītā's. If he is a god and his wife a goddess, there is no tragedy (see Goldman 2009). In the Rām° there is much material for moral and cultural rumination; here I concentrate on the structure.

[961] Books 1 and 7 present Rāma as the incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is explained that he and his brothers were all born as parts of Viṣṇu, but Rāma had the biggest part of the god. In "the core" (the oldest part) of the text he is only compared to Viṣṇu, and also to Indra, which is more suitable to the ethos of a heroic epic.

[962] See Hiltebeitel 2005: 460-461.

[963] Rāma's brothers are very loyal to him: Bharata accepts to rule only because Rāma wants to respect his father's promise and even then only as a regent. Lakṣmaṇa is a constant companion of Rāma and faithful to the point of self-sacrifice. Śatrughna, a twin brother of Lakṣmaṇa, helps Bharata to rule the kingdom while Rāma is away. His loyalty shows in his hate of Kaikeyī and her servant, that have caused Rāma's banishment.

[964] This does not mean that anything could be known about him, except that he may have composed the first version of the Rām°. Vālmīki is not mentioned elsewhere before the Rāmº, not in the MBh (Critical Edition) or in the Vedic literature.

Here my main concern is again the frame. Although the structure is not probably original to the epic and was borrowed from the MBh, as an early borrowing it is intriguing. The first book (and the first part of the outer frame) starts off with a purpose to present the author, the subject and the genesis the Rāmº, i.e. the same things as F(I) of the MBh, but with a different style and approach. The plot proceeds in a linear and smooth fashion compared to the recursive movement of the F(I). There are no back-stories or digressions. The first *sarga* begins straight away with the future author Vālmīki asking whether such a man exists who is virtuous, truthful and exemplary in every way. The seer Nārada[965], a visitor in Vālmīki's retreat, answers by praising Rāma: he is such a man. Then Nārada summarizes (1.1.18-71) the narrative of Rāma contained in the books 2-6. In the second *sarga* Nārada flies away (!) and Vālmīki goes to the riverbank. There he sees how a low-caste hunter kills a *krauñca* bird[966] and hears the sorrowful wail of its mate. He is filled with sympathy and grief and curses the hunter on the spot with a couplet. The novelty and emotion of the stanza takes him by surprise. He realizes that he has invented a metre (*śloka*) that has arisen from a sentiment of grief (*śoka*).[967] The god Brahmā appears and explains that Vālmīki should use his *śloka* to retell of the story that Nārada has told him. To equip him to compose his work, Brahmā gives him insight to the whole story, also to future happenings that Nārada has not revealed to him.

In the third *sarga* Vālmīki meditates, seeking in this way "means of access to this tale" (1.3.2.). While doing this, he imagines another summary of the poem-to-be: his version is in the form of "a list of contents"[968]. In the fourth *sarga* it is told that Vālmīki composed his poem after Rāma had regained his kingdom (i.e. till the end of the book 6) and added also "the future and final events" (= the book 7).[969] Then the seer wonders who would perform the work, and thinks about the two young men who live in his retreat.

[965] Nārada is an ancient seer. He has been met before in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa and in the MBh.
[966] A kind of a crane.
[967] Vālmīki's connection of the sympathetic sentiment and artistic form is a fine literary touch and reinforces the idea that the Rām° has been composed in the context of the advent of the *kāvya* and the literary aesthetics formulated in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (4th century CE, see). *Rasas*, aesthetic sentiments, are mentioned in 1.4.8. in this work. Again it must be emphasized that they formed the basis of the theory about the creation and reception of an artistic work in the Classical age.
[968] It includes the banishment of Sītā in the end, which the version of Nārada does not mention.
[969] Goldman's translation. As in the MBh, here also one gets the impression that the story is known already before it has happened.

They are Kuśa and Lava, the sons of a king.[970] He teaches the poem to them[971] and they start to perform it to "seers, brahmans and good people" who rejoice and praise the poem. On one occasion Rāma hears them sing, brings them to his palace and makes them recite there the story.

Here the frame ends, and the fifth *sarga* starts the actual narrative. There is a clear change of level, but (in this level) no affirmation of the narrative situation, or a narratee who would ask questions. The narrator talks in the first person singular: "I will recite it [the Rām°] from the beginning in its entirety, omitting nothing" (1.5.4).[972] S/he is not identified as Kuśa or Lava. After the first announcement the narrator does not use "I" but disappears behind the narration, and the narratee (Rāma) that the 1.4. supposes, appears in this book and in the books 2-6 only as a narrated character.[973]

The book 7 picks up "the story of Rāma" but not the outer frame: the overt narrator, the overt narratee, and the narrative situation are nowhere to be found. It is told (by a fictive covert narrator) that after having returned to his kingdom Rāma, pressed by the public opinion, banishes Sītā, who is rescued by Vālmīki. She gives birth to Kuśa and Lava. After some years Rāma performs a horse sacrifice[974], and Vālmīki brings the twins to the camp beside the sacrificial area. Rāma hears the boys sing and summons them to him. They start to sing, and after they have sung twenty *sargas*, Rāma asks who has composed the poem (7.85.19). Kuśa and Lava say that the author is Vālmīki and tell that he has used 24 000 verses, 500 *sargas* and a hundred stories in making it[975], and it

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[970] The two students are always talked about together (*kuśīlavau*). This dual form is not right, "Kuśa and Lava" would be *kuśalavau*. *Kuśīlava* means "a bard", "a wandering troubadour": this word evidently inspired the naming of the two students. In the book 1 they are not identified as the sons of Rāma. This connection is made only in the book 7. The two boys are said to *sing* the narrative, not to recite it. They. are described as being *gāndharva-tattva-jñau*, "experts in musical performance". There could have been first a frame in which the singing is done in the court, which provides a perfect context for singing, poetry and music which the text emphasizes.

[971] At this point it is said that the Rām° is "the tale of Sītā and the slaying of Paulastya [Rāvaṇa]". Rāma is not mentioned at all in this description of the epic, and this has naturally raised questions. Has there been an older text with a different emphasis? Or does this only mean that the poem originally ended in Rāvaṇa's death?

[972] Goldman's translation.

[973] For this reason Minkowski dismisses the Rām° as an example of the use of the frame narrative (Minkowski 1989: 412). But even if the outer frame is not sustained by interaction between Kuśa and Lava and Rāma, the "sustenance" is not needed to establish a frame: this is Minkowski's own restriction, not something that narratologists would require. In addition, there are other embeddings in the Rāmº that use a the narrative situation with a narrator and a narratee. Even if the frames of the Rāmº are borrowed from the MBh, they are still frames and early frames to boot.

[974] The horse sacrifice that Daśaratha performs in the book 1 is much nearer to the Vedic ritual than Rāma's sacrifice in book 7. The latter may have been borrowed from the MBh.

[975] The critical edition has 606 *sargas* and the Vulgate 645.

contains the entire life-story of Rāma. This is the third "table of contents" that is given in the epic.

Then Vālmīki appears, to assert both his "authority" and the innocence of Sītā. He is sent to fetch Sītā and she comes, vows again that she has been chaste and descends into earth. After Brahmā has consoled Rāma, Kuśa and Lava start their singing again. They tell how Rāma ruled for thousands of years, how his brothers died, and how he divided his kingdom between his two sons and then departed to heaven.[976]

If the books 1 and 7 are compared, it proves difficult to combine them so that there would be a continuous outer frame. In the last book there is a narrative situation: the twins sing 25 *sargas*, are interrupted, and then go on to sing about future events. But it is not the same narrative situation as in the book 1. So the frame announced in the book 1 is closed only by the ending of the whole narrative; there is no return to it. But we can analyse the structure as an one-sided frame: the outer frame consists only of the 1.1-4., and the singing of Kuśa and Lava in the book 7 is not a part of the frame but a part of the embedded narrative.[977] This type of frame appears also in other works. The *kathāmukha* of the *Pañcatantra* is a frame which only establishes the narrative situation and names the narrator, but it is not sustained or closed at the end. Some versions of the cycle leave also the frame-story the last of the five books unclosed.

Again we return to the definition of the frame. Most narratologists are of the opinion that a non-closure at the end of the narrative does not "undo" the frame.[978] It is also common that a frame that is situated only in the beginning of the narrative has the form of "an introduction" or "a preface", so that it tells about the fictional author (or narrator) and the circumstances in which the embedded narrative was composed (or took place). It is also typical that this "author and origin" frame disappears after the narrative switches into the actual story. [979]

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[976] The future history of Rāma is included already in Nārada's summary (1.2.) and Brahmā says to Vālmīki (1.2.32-33) that also that which is hidden (the future) will be revealed to him, so he can tell Rāma's story from the begining to the end. Therefore we can assume that his work can tell also about the future up until the death of Rāma.

[977] One alternative would be to treat the two narrative situations similarly to the two narrative situations in the F(I) of the MBh, so that the first recitation of the Rāmº would take place in the in the palace ("anonymous narrator", book 1 -book 7) and the second (Kuśa and Lava singing in the camp by the sacrificial area in the book 7) as another. But there is still a discrepancy between these that is graver than that of the F(I). So it is better to posit an outer frame only for the book 1. - Also the narrative situation of the book 7 (the horse sacrifice) belongs to another literary genre (*itihāsa-purāṇa* type).

[978] See Goffman 1974: 255-256; Nelles 1997: 146-149.

[979] Non-closed "prologue" frames are surprisingly common in Western novels from the 16th to the 19th century. E.g. Cervantes uses one in *Don Quixote* (which has also embedded narratives within the main narrative) Duifhuizen, in his article about frames, refers to the fiction of a "found manuscript" in many of

The lopsidedness of the outer frame is not the only curious feature in the Rāmº. That Rāma would be the narratee of his own life-story which in the narration extends further than the present time sounds strange, even when one remembers that Vālmīki has been given a kind of *divyacakśus* by Brahmā so that he can put also future events in his poem. But this feature also makes the Rāmº look modern and even authentic. In early Indian courts the king certainly would have wanted to hear the poets sing about his heroic deeds and praise him.

The "author-prologue" of the Rām° is a fine literary achievement. Vālmīki gets first a *worthy subject* (Nārada's tale of Rāma), then *a poetic vehicle* (the *śloka* metre) and finally the *insight* (a vision of "the full tale" given by Brahmā). During the process two summaries of the narrative are given.[980] Then, as Rāma's story has proceeded in the narrative present to the point where he has regained his kingdom, Vālmīki composes the Rāmº. He teaches it to Kuśa and Lava. The two young men go to Rāma and narrate him the Rāmº (1.5-76., 2-6)°. This part as such forms a complete work. The book 7 could be regarded as "a purāṇic appendix" to the Rāmº. Two thirds of it deal other things than the story of Rāma. There is the history of rākṣasas and Rāvaṇa, the youth of Hanuman and a string of other tales that often go back to Vedic times.[981]

I will here concentrate on the book 1 and the embedded stories it contains, because they form a whole that is older than that of the book 7, and it is also interesting to look at the way the frame structure is applied to a work that did not originally possess one. First m however, I address the questions of narrative time and "the author". There are no such problems in the narrative time as in the MBh, as the fictional datings inside the Rām° push all the events safely to the mythological past. Rāma rules for 11 000 years (book 7). He and other protagonists are contemporaries of the Vedic seers Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha (book 1). As in the MBh, the storyworld contains humanlike demons and other fantastic creatures, and also monkeys who behave like humans in every possible way. The author Vālmīki is presented in the book 1 as a character who lives and composes his text in this same mythological period that later became glorified as the golden age of the

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these (2010: 188). This manuscript is "a thinly veiled authenticating device that requires the Editor to provide a variety of framing paratexts such as prefaces, noted, and afterwords to tell the story of discovery and legitimize the text". The introductory frames of the epics work in the same way, although they tell the story of the composition, its inspiration and the transmission of the work, not the discovery.

[980] The second summary is evoked by Vālmīki's meditation, so it is not clear where it comes from. The presence of two summaries, though, seems to suggest that the composer was aware of the frames of the MBh.

[981] The book 7 contains the legend of Indra and Vṛtra, the story of Urvaśī and the king Iḻa who became a woman to give birth to Purūravas, the stories of Nahuṣa and Yayāti etc.

rule of Rāma (*Rāmrāj*). This lends the Rām° the authority of the Vedic past, even as the text is adhered to a different moral, social and aesthetic code.[982]

Like Vyāsa, Vālmīki is presented both as "the Author" and a narrated character but, also like Vyāsa, he is not presented as the performer of his text in the Rāmº. There is the fictive narrator[983] who starts to tell about Vālmīki and Nārada, and the primary narrator of the embedded narrative, to whom the books 1.5-76 and 2-6 must be attributed. This narrator is ostensibly "Kuśa and Lava", taking turns, because in the 1.4.27 they are told to begin their singing to Rāma. But they do not appear as narrators in "their narrative".

The structure of the outer frame of the Rām° is presented in the Diagram 15. The *Rām°*[2] signifies the whole text of the general narrator which contains also the frame (how *the Rām°*[1] = the work of Vālmīki, was composed and transmitted). Thus (as in the MBh), the Rāmº[2] = the book 1.1-4 and its embedding, the Rāmº[1].

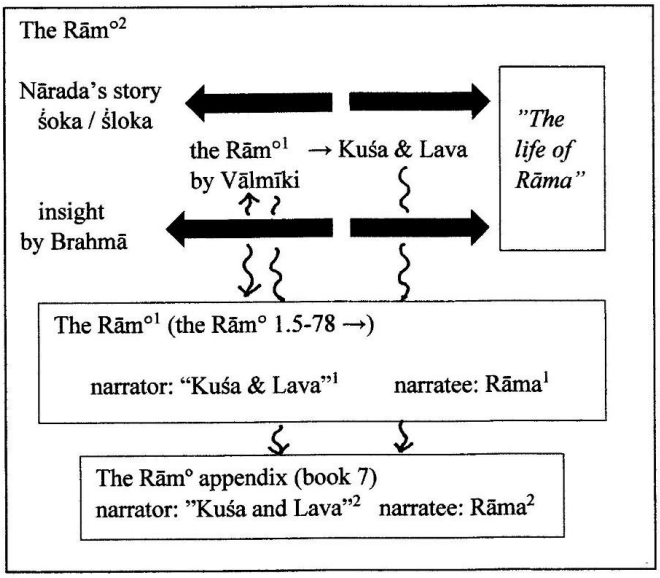
The Rām° appendix is the book 7, which is influenced both by the Rāmº[1] and the book 1.1-4. In the diagram it is put inside the frame that the book 1.1-4 forms, although it is later and should actually be outside it. But as it is does not contain 1.1-4 as its embedding, and still belongs to the Rāmº[2] as an appendix to the 1.1.4., I have put it inside in a separate box.

The narrator of the Rāmº[1] is marked as "Kuśa and Lava"[1]. The parentheses indicate that they are narrators only in regard to the frame. In the appendix (book 7) they appear as actual narrators but as this is an appendix to the whole work, they are conditioned both by frame (1.1-4.) and the existence of the Rāmº[1]: therefore they are marked in the diagram "Kuśa and Lava"[2]. The arrangement is a bit complicated, but the most important things is that the frame 1.1-4. defines the work of Vālmīki by its genesis, subject matter, meaning and style. The instigators of the narrative are Nārada (the subject matter) and the god Brahmā (impulse and inspiration) on one hand, and the metre *śloka* (medium) and "the life of Rāma" (message) on the other hand. Therefore the 1.1.-4. can be regarded as the outer frame for 1.5-76 and also the books 2-6 as their continuation.

[982] There are also other details that bind the Rāmº to Vedic world, e.g. the rituals which Vālmīki performs in his hermitage, his meditation and the characters of Nārada, Viśvāmitra and Rāma Jāmadagnya, and the ritual of *aśvamedha*. But it is noticeable that they all are in the books 1 an 7.

[983] As it is with Vyāsa, it is not theoretically consistent to posit Vālmīki as the fictive narrator.

Diagram 15. The outer frame of the *Rāmāyaṇa*



The relation of Rāma to the different versions of his life is also convoluted. He is at the same time a character in a narrative (or narratives) of his life, past, present and future, which others, Nārada, Brahmā and Vālmīki have composed, and a narratee of this "predestined" narrative.

Most of the embedded narratives of the main narrative are in the books 1 and 7. The Critical text does not mark them as subtales (*upākhyāna*) but some of the manuscripts do.[984] Many of the episodes in the main narrative would also qualify as subtales. The books 2-6 are so full of action and descriptions that the is little space for an interruption which an embedding inevitably causes. As said above, I have chosen the first book to illustrate the structure of the secondary embeddings in the Rām°.

In the introduction (*upodghāta*) of the *sargas* 1-4 there are the summaries by Nārada and Vālmīki, which count as embeddings. When the main narrative begins, there is first narrative to appear is that of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (1.8.6.-1.10.12), familiar from the MBh.[985] In the Rām° the story is modified to make it a back-story to the main narrative of the

[984] Hiltebeitel 2005: 470.
[985] See p. 229-230.

Rām°. This has made it less effective as an independent narrative and, in addition, the retelling is done in clumsy and prudish style.

The story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga is narrated in two levels, which adds to the complexity of the scheme. The action begins in the kingdom of Ayodhya and in the court of the king Daśaratha,[986] who is the father of Rāma. At this stage he is still childless and thinks that he needs to perform a ritual to get a son. He asks his charioteer (*sūta*) Sumantra to fetch his family priest and gurus. Sumantra says that he has heard an ancient story which deals with acquiring of a son. It was told long ago ("in the age of gods") to "the seers" by the holy Sanatkumāra[987]. Next Sumantra repeats the story by quoting the earlier narrator, in the same way Ugraśravas narrates what Vaiśaṃpāyana has narrated in the MBh.

Sanatkumāra, the second-level narrator, begins the story in 1.8.7.. It is placed in the future but the holy seer "sees it". He tells the first part of it, ending his tale with the prophesy that Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, who will bring rain to the king of Aṅga, would also bring sons to Daśaratha (1.8.22.). Now Daśaratha asks Sumantra how Ṛṣyaśṛṅga will be persuaded to come to the king of Aṅga (1.8.23). Sumantra continues his narrative again by quoting Sanatkumāra (1.9.2-32[988]). The old seer now ends the story with the marriage of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga to the king's daughter Śāntā. Then he gives again a prophesy (1.10.1.-12) and says that Daśaratha will in the future become an ally of the father-in-law of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. Daśaratha should only ask the other king to lend his son-in-law to do a sacrifice to obtain a son. After hearing the narrative Daśaratha sends promptly for Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, and the sacrifice brings him four sons, of which Rāma is the eldest.

There are some oddities in this reworking. First, Sanatkumāra as a third-level narrator is placed in the far past. But the characters in his story must be contemporaries of the king Daśaratha, so that he can have benefit for the magical powers of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga. So the whole story is told by the ancient seer as a prophesy, which is quite awkward. Secondly, it seems that the composer was trying out the strategy of double embedding (F(I) and F(II)) that characterizes the main narrative of the MBh. But "the level of Sanatkumāra", unlike F(II), consists only of the narrative voice of Sanatkumāra, quoted by Sumantra. The narrative situation or the narratees are not affirmed, which makes the

[986] The story starts with an eloborate description of the city and the deeds of the king (1.5-7).
[987] Sanatkumāra is an ancient seer, mentioned e.g. in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.
[988] At this point the words of Sumantra reveals that also councillors of the king are listening to him, so he must have fetched them at some point, as the king ordered him to do in the beginning.

whole addition of this level look superfluous. Why not make Sumantra simply narrate the story without the faithful quoting of Sanatkumāra?

On the other hand, the higher level of Sumantra and Daśaratha works as it should. Daśaratha as a narratee is active and Sumantra reacts to his questions, even if this means that he is quoting Sanatkumāra. Also the idea that a boy who can bring rain can also make queens give birth is not far-fetched. Rain is certainly connected with fertility. But this new twist spoils the originality of the plot. It shifts the focus from the innocent protagonist and his humorous initiation to the ways of the world to the dealings of Daśaratha and the king of Aṅga, which are far less interesting.

Next embeddings are simpler and succeed remarkably well. They create a narrative situation with a narrator and a narratee, which have an interactive relation. All the embeddings are all included in the part where the young prince[989] travels with the seer Viśvāmitra his brother Lakṣmaṇa[990]. Rākṣasas have spoiled the sacrifice of the seer and only Rāma can drive them away, so he has taken the princes with him. They will also go to Mithilā where king Janaka has presented a huge bow of Śiva to be drawn, as a test of strength.

On the way Viśvāmitra tells stories about Kāma (the love god, 1.22.10-14), of the demoness Tāṭaka (1.24.4-11) and about the Dwarf (an incarnation of Viṣṇu, 1.28.3-11). Rāma kills Tāṭaka and other demons, and the sacrifice of the seer is saved.[991] Then Viśvāmitra narrates the story of Kuśanābha and his offspring (1.31.1.- 1.33.13) which tells about the seer's own ancestry, and a story about Umā and Gaṅgā, the daughters of Himalaya (1.34.12. - 1.43.20). This long narrative contains the myths of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (Umā), the birth of Skanda, the sons of Sagara and the ascesis of Bhagīratha[992], which all are popular subjects in the *Purāṇas* and early temple sculpture. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa take part in the storytelling by asking questions. Before the story of Umā they ask for the details of stories of the both sisters (1.35.2-4) and before the story of Sagara Rāma wants again more details (1.38.2.).

The narratives of the churning of the ocean and the myth of Aditi and Diti and their sons (gods and demons) follow in 1.44.14 - 1.46.9. Then the travellers come to

[989] Most commentators say that Rāma is only twelve at this time.
[990] Lakṣmaṇa is from an early age devoted to Rāma.
[991] The texts describes here lavishly the divine arms that Viśvāmitra gives Rāma as a reward, but these are never used afterwards.
[992] The sons of Sagara, while searching or the horse that their father needed for his sacrifice, insulted the seer Kapila who burned them to ashes. To purify the ashes, their descendant Bhagīratha practiced ascetism and brought (the waters of) Gangā from heaven to the earth.

Mithilā, where Viśvāmitra tells the story of Gautama and his wife Ahalyā[993] (1.47.15. - 1.48.11). By Rāma's help Ahalyā is purified and the pair is united. Then Gautama's son Śatānanda receives them and narrates the story of Viśvāmitra. This very long narrative (1.50.17. - 1.64.19) tells how Viśvāmitra became a seer (he had been a king before) and how he waged war with another mighty seer Vasiṣṭha and was finally reconciled with him. The "biography" contains two episodes that are independent narratives, the story of Triśaṅku (1.56.10.- 1.59.33) and the narrative of Śunaḥśepa (1.60.5. - 1.61.26.).[994] After this Rāma wins Sītā by breaking the great bow of Śiva, and his younger brothers marry her sisters. The book ends in an episode in which Bhārgava Rāma (the recurring grim figure of the MBh) pays visit to his namesake, asks him to put an arrow to another big bow, his heirloom that has belonged to Viṣṇu, and challenges him to combat (1.73. 16. - 1.74.28.). Rāma proves to be superior and the scene and also the book ends with the ancient warrior paying homage to Rāma and retreating.

The narrative situations inside the book 1 and also the other cases of embedded narratives within the Rām°[1] (most of them in the book 7) are sustained. The narrator (Sumantra, Viśvāmitra, Śatānanda) indicates his position by the use of first person and also by vocatives directed to the narratee.[995] This affirmation of the narrative situation by the dialogue between the narrator and the narratee is done at regular intervals, usually at the junctures (at the end or in the beginning of *sargas*). The affirmation summarizes either what has been told or what shall be told. The narratee also participates by questions and asks the narrator to continue or tell more about something. [996] In some of the longer tales,

[993] The motif of a lover disguised as the husband, present in the story of Gautama and Ahalyā, appears already in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (3.199-200) Indra is cuckolded when his protegee Kutsa seduces his wife after having taken Indra's form. Indra tries to change Kutsa's appearance, but Kutsa is always able to deceive the wife. Gautama and Ahalyā are first met in the MBh 5.12.6 and 12.258. In the latter version the story is told from the point of view of the son of the couple, Cirakāri ("Slow-to-act"). The wife (whose name is not mentioned) had been unfaithful and Gautama has ordered his son to kill her. Cirakāri pondered this for a long time and decided that his love for his mother was greater than his obedience for his father. By this time Gautama had also repented and wanted to stop his son and forgive his wife. This is a counter-narrative to the story of Rāma, son of Jamadagni, who beheads his mother ar his father's bidding. Fitzgerald has analysed the Cirakāri narrative in detail (2010: 31-59). - Attitudes got stricter by time; the Rām° presents Ahalyā as foolish and lusty, and angry Gautama punishes both Indra (whose testicles fall off) and Ahalyā (who will live in extreme penance until Rāma comes and purifies her). For the development of the Ahalyā story see Söhnen-Thieme 2016 (1996).
[994] See the chapter 2.3.3. The version of the Rām° is also discussed there (pp. 134-135).
[995] E.g. Sumantra to Daśaratha: "Now listen further, lord of kings, to my helpful story, just as the wise descendant of the gods related it." (1.10.1.) Viśvāmitra to Rāma: "This then, Rāma, is the story of my family and my birth." (1.33.13). Śatānanda to Rāma: "This then, Rāghava [= Rāma], is the way the mighty ascetic Viśvāmitra began his feud with the great Vasiṣṭha." (1.56.1.) (Translations by Goldman.)
[996] E.g. Daśaratha to Sumantra: "Tell me exactly how Ṛṣyaśṛṅga was brought." (1.8.23) Rāma to Viśvāmitra: "This is a wonderful and edifying tale you have told, brahman. You are familiar with these

as in the story of Viśvāmitra, the narratee does not interrupt the narration, but for example in this particular tale the narrator summarizes in every possible juncture what has been told, and any additional comments of the narratee would only bog down the dramatic flow of the narration.

It is evident that the composer wanted to retain the same effect of a "real-life" storytelling as in the MBh, but the device of evoking the narrative situation and the frame is used in the book 1 in a more harmonized, "classical" way. The questions do not interrupt the narrative so that the narrator would digress and tell another story in between. Apparently for the same reason the composer of the Rām° has made the introductory "Vālmīki" frame linear and compact. There is only one third-level embedding, the narrative of Sanatkumāra, quoted (and narrated) by Sumantra: in it the dialogue that affirms the narrative situation is not used, but the presence of the third-degree narrative situation is implied only by the comments of the second-level narrator Sumantra. After this "experiment" the composer stuck to model in which only two narrative levels are used.

This classical stylization of the storytelling and the effort to create a harmonious whole is evident throughout the Rām°. The plotting is not always as satisfying as the manipulation of the structures or the mastery of the language. Many of the narratives that are taken from the earlier literature are given a bland and undramatic form in the Rām°, compared to the versions of the MBh or the *Brāhmaṇas*. E.g. the story of Śunaḥśepa is told only to display the power and wisdom of Viśvāmitra: he is the one who knows the *mantras* that appeal to the gods, not Śunaḥśepa, who is only an ignorant and fearful boy.

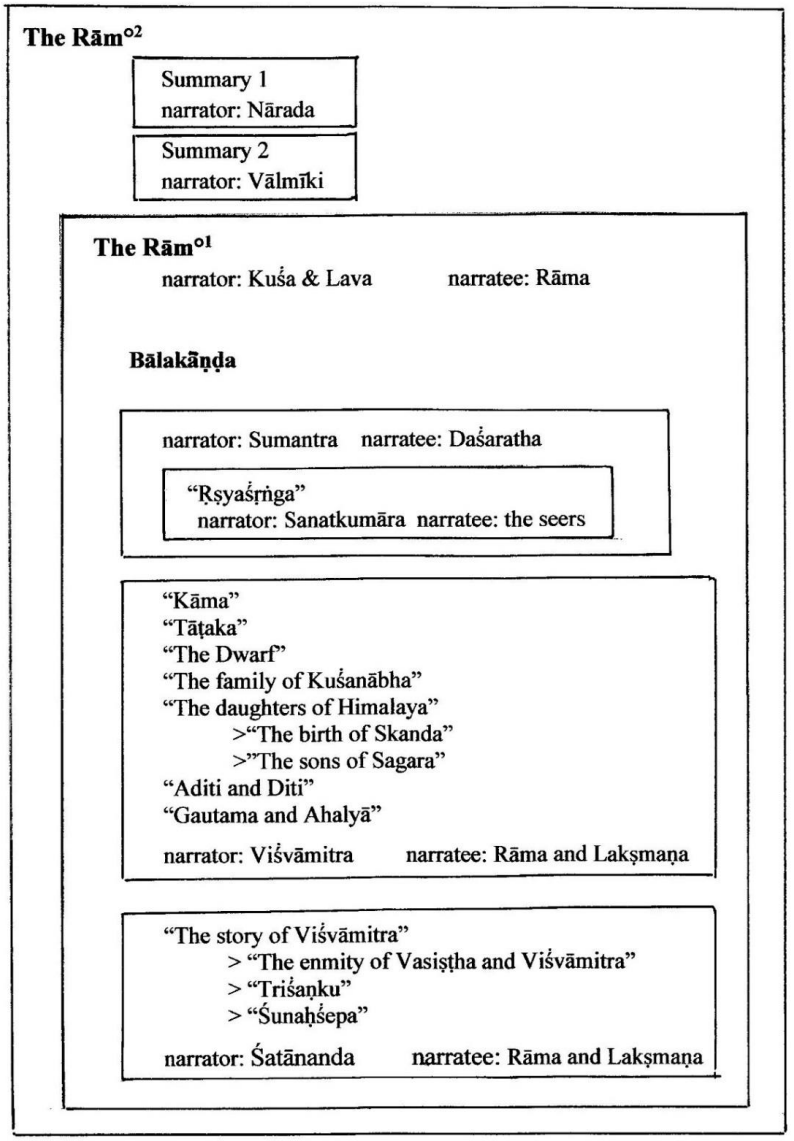
The embedded narratives in the Rām° are not used to provide a mirror narrative or comment on the main narrative, or give an exemplum or a proof of what has been said, as in the MBh. The impulse of narrating comes either (i) from the place where the characters are and mythical persons and events connected with it (e.g. the telling of the story of the Dwarf when coming in the ashram of the Perfect Being in 1.28), or (ii) from the need to tell a back-story for a character of the main narrative (Viśvāmitra, Rāvaṇa). The first occasion, telling a story adhered to a certain holy place, which is used also in the pilgrimage sequences in the MBh, is quite viable in the context of the religious life of ancient and also of modern India. In such a work as the Rām° which paves way to the courtly literature it is a more realistic narrative situation than the breaks in the Vedic

matters in detail: so please tell us the details of the origins, both in heaven and in the world of men, of the eldest daughter of the mountain king." (1.35.2)

ritual. By the means of "a tour to ancient places" a great deal of traditional mythological lore and ancient narrative stock could be incorporated in both the MBh and the Rām°.

The levels and narrators of the book 1 are shown in the Diagram 16. The arrowheads pointing to right indicate individual tales that are narrated as a part of a greater motif: they are on the same level as "the main motif", not embedded narratives.

Diagram 16. The levels and narrators in the first book of the *Rāmāyaṇa*



The Rām° provides further evidence for the establishment and use of the framing technique in the Epic age. It is evident that the technique was taken from the MBh but the chronological distance between these works cannot be long: there may be quite a lot of overlapping. It is notable that Vālmīki, or whoever composed the book 1 of the Rām°, recognized the possibilities of the technique and used it in his own way, introducing integrated dialogue and simplified outer frame. It is also striking that there is nothing in the Rāmº to prove that it was thought to be connected in any way to the Vedic ritual. The frame is used as a literary device.

3.5.2. The Jātakas

The *Jātakas* ("Birth Stories") are among the earliest examples of Buddhist literature in India. They are written in the middle Indian literary language of Pāli.[997] They have survived in two layers. There are 2500 verses (*gāthās*), which belong to the canon of the Theravāda Buddhists,[998] and 547 prose narratives and as well as a frame attached to them. The stories are arranged (in theory, not always in practice) so that the number of verses increases towards the end of the collection. Only about fifty of the longest *Jātakas* are intelligible as narratives without the prose which provides a commentary for them.[999] There are narratives that resemble *Jātakas* elsewhere in the Pāli canon, indicating that the narrative was mostly seen by the Buddhists as a excellent way to teach Buddhist virtues. The Jātakas are nevertheless unique, because Buddhists did not as a rule gather narratives into collections.[1000]

[997] Pāli is the language of the Theravāda canon (*Tipiṭaka*), historical chronicles and some other writings of the Theravāda Buddhists, such as the *Jātakas*. It is based on the spoken languages of northern India.
[998] They are a part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, which is the fifth book of the *Sutta Piṭaka* of the *Tipiṭaka*. In it the collection is called *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* or *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*. The *Tipiṭaka*, by the way, employs frames in its structure. As the components are mostly not pure narratives, the *Jātakas* represent here this corpus.
[999] v. Hinüber 1996: 54-58.
[1000] See Appleton 2015: 100. - There is e.g. another collection of tales called *Cariyapiṭaka*, which, like the *Jātaka gāthās*, is a part of the *Khuddaka Nikaya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. It contains 25 stories of Buddha's former births. The are in verse and Buddha is a first person narrator in them. The stories are taken from the *Jātakas* and they are meant to teach the Buddhist virtues. The compilation has a markedly didactic and serious tone throughout, which has made it less popular than the *Jātakas*. - In some places in the Canon the monks are forbidden to tell each other stories of mundane subjects, apparently because this is

The narratives of the *Jātakas* tell a story about previous lifespans of the Buddha, from the time when he was a Bodhisattva, a Buddha-to-be (*Bodhisatta* in Pāli) and yet to be born as Siddhartha Gautama. Thus he as Bodhisatta appears as a prince, a minister, a wandering ascete, a merchant or a farmer, or a tree spirit, a monkey, a parrot or a dog[1001], and all kinds of fables and narratives can be used as a starting-point.

The earliest possible dating for the verses is 3rd or 2nd century BCE. The prose around them is many centuries later.[1002] In some cases it has been hard work to make the two parts fit together and the result is not very satisfactory. The *gāthās* have "frequently no connection to Buddhism".[1003] The stories come from oral folktale tradition and sometimes from contemporary literary sources, but a Buddhist message has been planted into them and into the frame, which presents the stories as having been narrated by Buddha himself. It is very probable that the performer of the *gāthās* supplied originally an improvised commentary that provided the narrative, using the verses as a memory aid. This original commentary must have already been such that applied the moral of the stories to the life of the Buddhist *sangha*. Otherwise the "secular" *gāthās* would not have been accepted to the Buddhist canon. But the prose part did not survive, as it was mutable and not sanctified by being admitted to the canon. Only later a prose commentary, still having no canonical status, was added. Alsdorf used this hypothesis as an evidence for the *ākhyāna* theory.[1004]

For the history of the development of the frame the *Jātakas* present an example of the manner in which "floating" narratives were taken and adapted into the literary corpus in ancient India. The narratives vary very much in their nature and subject. They may belong to the *nīti* (wise conduct) tradition like the *Pañcatantra* cycle, tell an animal fable or a fairy tale with fantastic elements, present an anecdote or a prank, narrate a satirical story or a romance with a picaro as the protagonist, or they can teach moral values

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"idle talk" and it directs the mind away from higher ends. In spite of this the *Jātakas* have remained popular.

[1001] *Bodhisatta* appears 357 times as a human being, 123 times as an animal and 66 times as a god or godlike being. See Laut 1993. Laut's article has also an extensive bibliography on the subject. The stories have been depicted early in painting and sculpture, e.g. in Ajantā (5th century CE), and in Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Amarāvatī (3rd century BCE to 2nd century CE). The dating of Bhārhut (3rd - 2nd centuries BCE) has been taken as a proof of the age of the verses, as the sculptures there contains 41 scenes that appear in the *Jātakas*.

[1002] The most probable timing for the Pāli prose text is 5th century CE. According to tradition it was a translation of a commentary in Sinhalese that had been translated from an earlier Pāli text, but this chain may be inaginary.

[1003] v. Hinüber 1996: 55.

[1004] Alsdorf 1974: 36-48. See p. 85 above.

or give an example of a pious or a saintly person. Some are funny, some are witty, some are dead earnest and rather boring. Quite a many of them have parallels in the late Vedic literature, in the MBh, the Rāmº and the *Pañcatantra* cycle, which testifies both of their old age and the continuation of the narrative tradition. In the *Jātakas* which come late in the collection and contain a longer stretch of verses the prose is often flat and uninteresting. It seems that the composer of the prose narrative excels if there is a backing of a traditional story and fails if his only inspiration are the *gāthās*.

These later *Jātakas* are elaborate and interesting, but not particularly fruitful for this study. They are also too long to be quoted in full. Therefore two shorter examples are given here.

The *Jātakas* have a fixed structure. First there is *Paccuppannavatthu* ("the story of the present"), which begins with a reference to the *gāthās* behind the story and then explains on which occasion the Buddha told this particular story to his followers. "The present story" provides the outer frame and the narrative situation. In it Buddha is a narrator-character ("the Teacher"). The fictive / primary narrator is not named but he sounds very much like a one of Buddha's disciples, i.e. the invisible *narratees* in the narrative situation. The second unit is the prose narrative, *Atītavatthu* ("the story of the past"), with a covert narrator: the Buddha is present in his past incarnation only as a character ("Bodhisatta"). Appleton sees this as a distancing act, which separates the present Buddha from his earlier incarnations that are not perfect like him.[1005]

"The story of the past" begins always with the fairytalish formula "once when so-and-so was a king, Bodhisatta was born there and there as such and such". After the narrative (or in the middle of it) come the *gāthās* in full. Usually they look like a summary of the narrative (although they are older), but they can also be connected with the present story. Then there is a short commentary (*Veyyākarana*) that explains the verses (this is usually left out in the translation) and finally a "connection" (*Samodhāna*), which returns to the outer frame: the Buddha as the character-narrator explains the analogy between the past story and the present story.

Here is the *Sīhacammajātaka* (no. 189), an animal fable, told in full. The story appears in most of the versions of the *Pañcatantra* ("The donkey in a tiger's skin"). The frame is indicated with bold letters, and the *gāthās* are printed in italics.

[1005] Appleton 2015: 101-104.

"*It is no lion nor a tiger...*": this narrative, like the one before, was told about Kokālika [a certain bragging person who thought too much about himself] by the Teacher while he was in Jetavahana.
Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was the king of Vārāṇasī, Bodhisatta was born in a family of a farmer, and when he grew up, he too earned his livelihood as a farmer.
There was then a merchant who travelled about, hawking various goods which his donkey carried on his back. When the hawker came into a village, he took the bundle off the donkey, put a skin of a lion on his back and let him loose in fields of rice and barley. When the watchmen saw the animal, they thought it was a lion, and were too scared to come near.
One day the hawker came to a certain village, and as he was cooking breakfast for himself, he put the lion's skin on the donkey and let him loose in a field of barley. The watchmen believed it was a lion and keeping their distance they fled to their houses and raised alarm in the village. The villagers made haste and ran with arms to the field, and they shouted and blew conches and beated drums. The donkey became frightened and gave out a honking sound. Then the Bodhisatta, who saw that it was a donkey, repeated the first verse:
"*It is no lion nor a tiger,*
it is not even a panther:
but it is only a honking donkey
with a skin of lion on his back!"
When the villagers heard that it was only a donkey, they beat him so that they broke his bones, and took the lion's skin and went off. The hawker came and saw that his animal was in a sorry state, and repeated the second verse:
"*If the donkey had been cautious,*
for a long time that green barley he would have eaten
in his disguise of the lion's skin:
but he had to braw, and so he got beaten."
As he recited the verse, the donkey died. The hawker left him there and went on with his journey.
After the narrative was ended, the Teacher identified the birth: "At that time Kokālika was the donkey and I myself was the wise farmer."[1006]

In this story Bodhisatta is only an onlooker who is made to repeat the first part of the *gāthā* that is the basis of this story. It is clear that his role is planted into the old story. It is necessary to put him into a position in which he can recite the *gāthā* or at least a part of it. Another example, *Aggikajātaja* (no. 129), is one of a pair of two similar stories about a jackal and a king of rats. In the frame, which is left out here, it is said that Buddha is in Jetavahana and tells this story about a certain hypocrite. Now Bodhisatta is an actor in the narrative.

[1006] My translation.

Once upon a time when Brahmadatta was the king of Vārāṇasī, the Bodhisatta was born as a king of the rats and lived in a forest. One day a fire broke out there and a jackal who could not flee put the top of his head in a hole of a tree when the flames reached him. The fire burned all his hair but left a tuft upon his bald head[1007], in the place where the crown had been shielded by the tree. When he was drinking water in a pool among the rocks, he saw the reflection of his top-knot. "Now I have something that I can make use of", he thought. As he wandered on, he came to the cave of rats, and said to himself: "I will cheat these rats and eat them." With this plan in mind he stood in that place on one leg and faced the sun [like a holy man][1008].

The Bodhisatta saw him as he went by in search of food, and believed that here was a creature that was holy and virtuous. He approached the jackal and asked his name.

"I am Bhāradvāja[1009], the priest of the God of Fire."

"Why are you standing here?"

"I have come to guard you and your kin."

"How will you guard us?"

"I know how to count with my fingers, so I will count your number when you pass me by in the morning and in the evening, so I am sure that there are as many to come home as have left. This is how I guard you."

"You must then stay here and guard us, dear uncle."

As he had said, he started to count the rats when they come out in the morning. "One, two, three," he counted, and in a similar way when they came back at night. But every time he counted, he seized the last one and gobbled him up. The number of the rats went down, and the Bodhisatta became suspicious and at one night put himself at the end of the row. There he saw what was going on, and he turned and faced the jackal and said: "It is not your holiness, Bhāradvāja, the priest of the God of Fire, that has given your head that top-knot, but greediness." And he recited this verse:

"*Greed it was, not virtue,*
that gave you that crest of hair!
Our count has become much too low:
so now, Fire priest, we have seen the last of you!"[1010]

There is nothing particularly Buddhist in these two tales, but they have been taken and adapted to mock and condemn vices that the Buddhists criticized: boasting and hypocrisy. Other tales condemn avarice, vanity, selfishness, envy, thoughtlessness, lust, apostasy,

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[1007] This is the way the Buddhist monks used to shave their hair.

[1008] I take this description from the preceding story (*Biḷārajātaka*, no. 128) which is nearly the same. In this place the text says instead of repeating the same scene: "just as in the preceding story". The same note is given in the place in which the king of rats places himself at the end of row, and there I have also supplied the section that is left out. - In the *Jātaka* no. 128 the animal is a jackal in the prose but a cat in the *gāthā*. A cat is more suitable enemy for rats, and in parallel tales it is a cat that tries and often also succeeds in fooling mice or rats by pretending to be a figure of objective authority.

[1009] The jackal gives the name of a very eminent seer and Vedic poet and teacher.

[1010] My translation.

wrath and ingratitude. Generosity, mercy and altruism are extolled. As said before, it is probable that first the *gāthās* were used as short notes about a particular tale, which could be narrated with one's own words by the performer in the storytelling situation. Then, as the prose narratives were written down as "commentaries", they were fixed and preserved, not as a part of canon but still as a part of the sacred tradition, just as the narratives of the *Brāhmaṇas*.

At the same time when the prose commentary was added, the collection was supplied with an outer frame which established the original narrator of the tales as the Buddha.[1011] This frame gave also the narrative situation for each tale: "the Teacher told this tale in this-and-this place about such-and-such person". The narrative situation contains also the narratees: Buddha's disciples, recipients of his teaching. They are not active or even visible, they only listen. But the fictive narrator seems to be one of them (see above). "The stories of the present" can be very long, much longer than the actual narratives which were called "stories of the past". They always begin with a quotation from the *gāthā* that is the core of the story. Here is an example of the introduction and "the story of the present" of the *Abhiṇhajātaka* (no. 27).

"*He cannot eat a thing...*": this story was told by the Teacher in Jetavahana, about a lay brother and an aged Elder monk.
There were two friends who lived in Sāvatthi. One of them became a monk but he used to go the house of the other every day, and his friend gave him food as alms, then ate himself and followed him to the monastery, where this friend would sit until the sun went down: only then he returned to the town. And then the monk, in turn, would follow his friend and escort him to the gates of the city before he turned back.
The monks learned about the friendship of these two. One day the monks sat in the assembly hall and talked about how close these two were. The Teacher came to the hall and asked what they were talking about. They told him.
"It is not only now that they are close, my brothers", said the Teacher. "They were close in the past too." And thus the Teacher told the story of the past.[1012]

After this there follows a fable about a close friendship between a dog and an elephant. The *Jātaka* narratives are formally all "past" embedded stories in regard to the "present

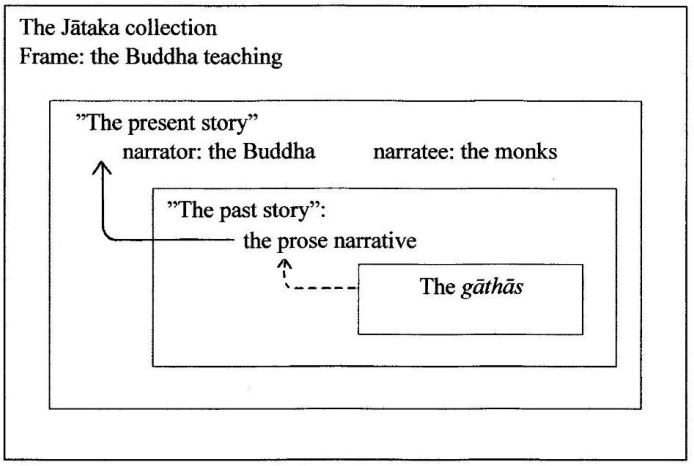
[1011] In the other versions of the *Jātaka* collections, as in the *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra (4th century CE), there is no Buddha, or a reference to Buddha as the original narrator of the stories. Nor is there a story of the present which binds the story of the past to the narrative situation of the *Jātakas*.
[1012] My translation.

time" frame. The "stories of the present" are either taken from other parts of the canon (e.g. from the *Apadānas* which tell of early Buddhist monks and nuns) or derived from "the story of the past". Often they are quite repetitive and formulaic in structure and contents.

The *gāthās* are earlier and used in "the story of the past" like the Vedic verses in the *Brāhmaṇas*. But they also connect this collection to the *Pañcatantra* cycle, in which the prose narrative alternates with both "story-verses" that summarize the plot and the moral of the narrative that follows, and gnomic stanzas taken from a common stock of proverbs and aphoristic verses. Many of the latter can also be found in poetry collections of the classical age.

It is usually thought that the prose narratives of *Jātakas*, because they were based on popular storytelling tradition, were composed and spread to teach Buddhist virtues to the laity. Appleton sees that this is wrong interpretation: "the present story" is usually placed within the monastic society and deals with problems that arise among its more defective members.[1013] So the collection would have originally served as a guidebook for the monks.

Diagram 17. The structure of the *Jātakas*



[1013] Appleton 2015: 105.

3.5.3. The Bṛhaddevatā

The last work that is discussed in this section is the *Bṛhaddevatā*, a compendium of etymologies, explanations and narratives related to Vedic hymns. Written in metrical form[1014], it is a backward-looking work, as it passes by the exegesis of ritual and sacrifice that the *Brāhmaṇas* had concentrated on and sets out to provide a linguistic and literary commentary of the Vedic *mantras*.[1015] The most interesting part of it are the mythological narratives that are used as an argument and explanation for *mantras* or added as "a footnote" to the subject that is discussed. There are about forty of them.[1016]

This text is included here because it illustrates so well the practice, traced and described throughout this study, of taking an old narrative and putting it into a new frame. It had began in the early Vedic times and by the Epic age it had given birth to a complex frame story with multiple frames and embeddings. The *Bṛhaddevatā* also shows how the old stories were recycled again and again in different contexts and with all kinds of variations, and how the tiny narrative fragments in Ṛgvedic verses proved to be a fertile source for retellings for over thousand years later and even after that. Finally, the work serves as an introduction to the next chapter in which the conversational frame is presented as a necessary companion to the Epic model.

The *Bṛhaddevatā* is attributed to Śaunaka, a traditional authority of Vedic grammar and etymology, and it is preserved in two recensions, short (1091 verses) and long (1206 verses). The first is nowadays dated between first and fifth centuries CE, the second is later. A. A. Macdonell, who has edited the work, has suggested that the core of the text could be as early as 5th century BCE.[1017] For its narrative content the *Bṛhaddevatā* is heavily influenced by the *Brāhmaṇas*. It also resembles these older texts in mixing *mantras* and exegesis with narrative and descriptive passages.[1018] It has eight chapters (*ādhyāya*) which have each about thirty sections (*varga*). There is a long introductory part which describes the deities and explains the grammar of the Vedic hymns, and the "list"

[1014] The metrum is mostly the *anuṣṭubh* (see p. 49 n. 208).
[1015] "In the *Bṛhaddevatā*, the early Vedic theme [...] of mutual dependence of men upon the gods is reasserted. [...] the *Bṛhaddevatā*'s stories reflect a very fluid relationship between poet and deity, and in that sense it seems a very old text indeed." (Patton 1996: 218.)
[1016] The best survey of the narrative material in the *Bṛhaddevatā* is Patton 1996.
[1017] Macdonell 1904. See Patton 1996: 465-474 (Appendix A).
[1018] Patton 1996: 20.

of the selected hymns to be explained begins from the 26th *varga* of the second chapter.[1019] The principal deities are Indra, Agni and Sūrya. The overall design of the work is related to the *Anukramaṇīs*, annotated indices of Vedic hymns that also are attributed to Śaunaka.

Like the *Brāhmaṇas*, this is a text that has embedded narratives but is not itself a narrative. Some idea of the type of discourse it uses can be elicited from following example. It tells the Vedic story of Dadhyañc and the Aśvins which was made a part of the narrative of rejuvenation of Cyavana in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (see chapter 2.3.2.). In the *Bṛhaddevatā* it is a part of a discussion of celestial deities and the description of the god Tvaṣṭṛ. The honey (or *soma*) which Tvaṣṭṛ holds to himself leads to the narrative of Dadhyañc. The narrative style is taut and stylish, bringing the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* into mind. The frame is indicated with bold letters.

3.16-25.

[The name of Tvaṣṭṛ] can be derived from the root *tviṣ*- or from *tvakṣ*-, or [from the phrase] "he quickly obtains" [*tūrṇam aśnute*] or "he assists in works" [*uttāraṇa karmaṣu*]: from this he has got this name. The thousandth ray of the sun, who dwells in the moon, he is also that honey which is above and also here, in Tvaṣṭṛ who is Agni.

Well-pleased, [Indra] bestowed on the son of Atharvan (= Dadhyañc) the sacred wisdom [of the honey/*soma*], and that power made the seer more brilliant. Indra forbade the seer: "Do not tell anybody of this honey! For if it is made known, I will not leave you alive." The two divine Aśvins asked for the honey in secret from the seer, and he told them what the Lord of Śacī (= Indra) had said. The two Nāsatyas said to him: "Be quick, lord, and make the two of us receive the honey by means of a horse's head. By no account will Indra kill you for that." Because Dadhyañc had spoken to the two Aśvins with the horse's head, Indra took that away from him. The two Aśvins put his own head back again. And the horse's head of Dadhyañc, severed by the bolt-bearer with his bolt, fell in the middle of the lake on Mount Śaryaṇāvat. Rising from the waters, giving many boons to living creatures, it is submerged in those waters till the end of the cosmic age.

Tvaṣṭṛ who belongs to the group of the middle sphere is the maker of forms. He is praised incidentally, there is no hymn [especially] for him.[1020]

Here one notices that the composer of the *Bṛhaddevatā* pushes aside the brāhmaṇic versions and their ritual considerations and goes back to the original sources. Dadhyañc does not possess the knowledge of the missing head of the sacrifice. He has his Ṛgvedic position as a guardian of the honey, and this is the thing that the Aśvins want. The motif

[1019] They are given in the order that they are presented in the *Ṛgveda*.
[1020] My translation, as are also the others in this chapter.

of the horse's head is preserved because it is also in the *Ṛgveda*. The severed head is not used by Indra to slay his enemies but to give boons to people. Even so, it is submerged in the waters till the end of times.[1021] Although it is short, the story is striking: narrating is done by an expert storyteller, even when compared to the composers of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*. So it is natural that the author of the *Bṛhaddevatā* seems to be particularly interested in hymns that have a narrative in them, such as the monologue and dialogue hymns.

Many of them are discussed inside an exegetical frame. Thus e.g. the hymns of Apalā, Ghoṣā, Agastya and Lopamudrā, and Purūravas and Urvaśī are all taken up. The Ṛgvedic story of Apalā (VIII.91, see pp. 68-71) is retold when discussing the hymns VIII.76-90, using the information that has been accumulated on the way. The version of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (3.221) has undoubtedly been familiar to the composer: there the story is narrated to explain the use of the Apalā *sāman*. The brāhmaṇic story revolves around the ritual of the *soma* pressing and the wish-fulfilling *sāman*. Indra is somewhat reluctant and the contact is described as kissing: Indra takes *soma* from the mouth of the girl. The composer of *Bṛhaddevatā* borrows this motif, but his version is rooted more firmly in the hymn. In addition it makes Indra from the first a very interested party in the meeting of the human and the god. Apalā has ascetic powers, which help her to know Indra's mind. This Apalā does not hesitate or prevaricate: she knows what to expect and is the master of the situation.

6.99-107.

Once there was a girl, daughter of Atri called Apalā, who had a skin disease. Indra had seen her in the lonely hermitage of her father and felt desire for her. Through ascesis she became aware of all Indra's intentions. She took the water pot and went for water. Seeing *soma* at the edge of the water, she praised him with a verse in the forest. **This is related to the verse: "*A girl who went to the water*" etc. (RV 8.91.1.)** She pressed *soma* in her mouth; having pressed it, she invoked Indra with the verse: "*You who go"* etc. (RV 89.2.) and Indra drank it from her mouth, after he had eaten cakes and a meal in her house. And she praised him with verses, and sang this triplet to him: ["*Surely he will be able?"* etc. (RV VIII.91. 4-6)] "Make me, o Śakra, one who has lovely hair, faultless limbs, and fair skin." Hearing this speech, the Destroyer of Forts was pleased by it. Indra, pulling her through the chariot opening between the carriage and the yoke, draw her out three times, and she became fair-skinned. The first skin which she cast off became a porcupine, the next became an alligator, and the last a chameleon.

[1021] The composer has added a new motif of a hidden magic treasure.

(106.) Yāska and Bhāguri say that this is a story (*itihāsa*), but Śaunaka says "*A maiden...*" [this hymn] [is] a *sūkta* (hymn) addressed to Indra, and also those two which come next [beginning] "*One who drinks...*" (VIII.92, VIII.93)[1022]

In the *Bṛhaddevatā* the Ṛgvedic verses are quoted inside the text in suitable places as the narrative progresses, just like in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In addition, the composer takes liberties in interpretation to tell a good story. Note the dispute about the genre of the piece in the (106) above: this subject will be taken up later. In the exegetical frame Śaunaka speaks of himself with his name and in 3rd person, like the ancient commentators: this implicitly raises his status as an authority.

The story of Ghoṣā (RV X.39, see pp. 71-74), which is rather enigmatic as a hymn, is given more details in the *Bṛhaddevatā*. In the *Ṛgveda* Ghoṣā is a daughter of a king, now she is a daughter of an ancient seer (to be able to "see" Vedic hymns like them). Other things about her are also revealed: old age that is mentioned briefly in the preceding hymn (X.39) is here attributed to her, and unlike in the case of the narrative of Apalā, it is said clearly that the Aśvins cure Ghoṣā by becoming her lovers. In this way "the exegetic narrative" of the *Bṛhaddevatā* grows into a completely new story.

7.42-48

Ghoṣā, daughter of Kakṣīvat[1023], was disfigured by a disease. Thus, in those days she stayed in her father's house for sixty years. She was burdened with great sorrow [and thought]: "Without son or husband I have reached old age in vain. Therefore I will turn to the two Lords of Light. Because by propitiating them my father obtained youth, long life, health, power, and poison for killing all creatures, I, his daughter, [would obtain] beauty and fortune, if those mantras with which the Aśvins shall be praised were revealed to me." When she was thinking about this, she saw the two hymns [beginning] "*Your chariot we invoke...*" etc. (RV.X.39, X.40). The Aśvins being praised, were pleased. Entering her vulva they made her free from aging, free from disease, and beautiful. They gave her a husband and a son, the seer Suhastya. **What the Nāsatyas gave to Ghoṣā by means of their two winged [horses] is proclaimed by [the verses]: "*We do not understand*" etc. (X.40.11) [and] "*Of her who grows old at home*" etc. (X.39.3.)**

The last but one example is a reprise of the narrative of Purūravas and Urvaśī, encountered two times before. The precursors were the Ṛgvedic hymn (X.95, see pp. 77-81) and the

[1022] Here Apalā's problems are bad skin and plain looks, and they are cured. Unlike in the *Ṛgveda* and *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa,* it is not said what happens to her father's bald head and barren fields, or to her non-existent pubic hair. They are not mentioned, even though they appear in the quotation.
[1023] Kakṣīvat, son of Dīrghatamas, appears also in other narratives in the *Bṛhaddevatā*.

version of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XI.5.1.1-17, see pp. 99-104). The *Bṛhaddevatā* follows the first and rejects the explanation of lambs and jealous gandharvas. It employs Indra instead, because Indra is one of the principal deities to be discussed, and perhaps also because as a warrior god he has more connection to tumult and lightnings that the Ṛgvedic verse evokes than the heavenly musicians. His sexual jealousy towards Purūravas is coloured by indignation that a god feels towards a human who enjoys pleasures that should be reserved to higher beings. The diction is again measured and economic, and there is no happy ending of the brāhmaṇic version. Nevertheless, the status of the human speaker is raised: Purūravas is a seer. But he is a royal seer, like Viśvāmitra.

7.147cd-154a

Now, in the times bygone the apsaras Urvaśī lived with the royal seer Purūravas. Having made a contract she followed the *dharma* in her relations with him. And the chastiser of Paka[1024], being jealous of her living with Purūravas, because this man's behaviour was like Brahmā's and his passion like Indra's, said to the bolt at his side, meaning to separate them: "O bolt, destroy the bond between these two, if you wish to do me a favour." "Very well", said the bolt, and destroyed their bond as if it were a mirage; and after losing her, he wandered around like one bereft of reason. As he wandered, he saw in a lake a [creature of a] shape that was like Urvaśī, with beautiful friends around her.[1025] He said to her: "Come back." But she answered the king in sorrow: "You cannot reach me here and now; [only] in heaven you will have me again."

(153) This conversation between two that is connected with an invocation, it is a dialogue according to Yāska, but Śaunaka [says it is] a narrative. This is the hymn: "*Hark, my wife*" etc. (10.85.1.)

The controversy voiced in the verse 153, met also in the narrative of Apalā above, is typical of the *Bṛhaddevatā*. Śaunaka opposes quite often other Vedic commentators. Rewriting the story of Apalā he says that it is not an *itihāsa*, but a hymn to Indra. But the legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī, he insists, is a narrative (*ākhyāna*), not even a dialogue (!). Only occasionally he conforms to other opinions. In his explanation of the Mudgala hymn (X.102; see pp. 150-151) he starts with the oldest authority Śākaṭāyana.[1026] "*Forth...*" etc (RV X.102), Śākaṭāyana thinks [this] is a narrative[1027], Yāska believes it is [a speech] addressed to mallet (*drughana*) or to Indra, but Śaunaka, that it is addressed to

[1024] Indra. Paka was a demon that Indra killed.
[1025] The context (and the earlier version) implies that Purūravas sees water-birds.
[1026] Śākaṭāyana was an ancient grammarian who preceded Yāska. His work is known only through references in Yāska's and Pāṇini's treatises.
[1027] Śākaṭāyana is a Vedic commentator whose treatise has not survived, but Yāska quotes him in his *Nirukta* (6th - 5th century BCE).

All-Gods." (The *Bṛhaddevatā* 8.11.) But whatever Śaunaka thinks about the genre of the hymns, he retells them all in an elegant manner.

Attention to the form of narrative is apparent in the story of Subandhu, which has started with a couple of names of Ṛgvedic poet-seers and developed to a legend of rivalry between "black" and "white" magic and the mystical quest of bringing the spirit back from the death. It is given as the last example, with its other versions, because I want to show how the spirit of narrative was carried across centuries from the Vedic hymns to the classical age of Sanskrit literature, and not only by poets and epic singers but also by scholars specialized in old texts.

The germ of the narrative of Subandhu are the four hymns in the tenth book of the *Ṛgveda* (X. 57-60). They all deal with the spirit or consciousness (*manas*) that is called back from death (the realm of Yama). X.57 is directed to All-Gods, X.58 to Manas, "the spirit" itself, X.59 to Nirṛti (Nothingness, Annihilation, personified as a goddess of death and oblivion) and others, and X.60 to Asamāti and others. The hymns are traditionally attributed to several seers: their names are Bandhu, Subandhu, Śrutabandhu, Viprabandhu and Gaupāyana.

The first four have similar names that have given the idea of them being brothers, and the name Gaupāyana ("Cowherd") has been taken as a reference to their family. Subandhu is mentioned in X.59.8. ("May the great heaven and earth, the mothers of order, bless Subandhu, may heaven and earth remove infirmity; let no harm come to you on earth.") and in greater length, in X.60.7 and X.60.10 ("This mother of yours, this father of yours, this giver of life to you has arrived; come back, Subandhu, to this [body] of yours that is what is moving." (7)[1028] "I have brought Subandhu's spirit from Yama, the son of Vivasvat, verily I have brought it for life and not for death, brought it where it is secure." (10))[1029] In addition, there is a person called Asamāti in the hymn 10.60: he is described as a mighty king of the clan of Ikṣvākus and Rathaproṣṭhas, and he and his chariot have something to do with the revival of Subandhu.

Patton says that "there is a narrative contained in the hymn"[1030], meaning the last one, and it is easy to agree: those clues about reviving a dead man clamour for a full story, similar to the narrative of Sāvitrī.[1031] It cannot be known whether there was one in the

[1028] Translation by Patton (1996: 320-321), slightly modified.
[1029] My translation.
[1030] Patton 2005: 165.
[1031] See p. 233.

popular Vedic lore, or was an original narrative constructed using the few names and hints that were available in the hymns 10.57-60. Anyhow, the two *Brāhmaṇas* of the *Sāmaveda* picked up this thread and made each their own version of the narrative behind the obscure verses. In the story of the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (8.12.5) there are two crafty (*māyāvin*) asuras (demons) called Kirāta and Ākuli.[1032] They meddle with the sacrifice of the Gaupāyana clan, so that the spirits of the sacrificers go into the enclosing sticks (*paridhī*) that mark out the sacrificial area. The Gaupāyanas make a prayer to the god Agni with the Ṛgvedic hymn X.60., and and the god gives them their spirits back. The story is simple but a bit enigmatic: as all the brothers lose their consciousness, it is not clear how they are able in this zombie state to pray Agni.

The composers of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (3.169-170) invent a lot of new details to make a proper story. Kirāta and Ākuli are so clever that they can cook without fire and sow seed that grows up to be served as food in the same day. They live in the court of the king Asamāti, son of Rathaproṣṭha, and bring him their magical food. The king appeals to them for help. He is in bad terms with the Gaupāyana brothers. The lads are in the Khāṇḍava Forest[1033] and perform a ritual which brings the king pain. Kirāta and Ākuli snatch away Subandhu's spirit while he is sleeping and hide it inside the enclosing sticks. The other brothers notice that Subandhu does not wake up. They are grieved but make a decision to bring Subandhu's spirit back from the dead. The brothers leave the forest and make a journey to the king, praying and performing rites on the way. They see the god Agni from afar, as the king is sitting at a ritual. When they ask for the spirit of Subadhu, the king says that it has gone inside the enclosing sticks of the ritual and the brothers may try to get it back from there if they can. They brothers pray with RV X.60.7. (see above) and revive Subandhu. This causes great joy. When the demons hear of this, they try to flee. But they have lost their magic powers and their handsome appearance, and they have become ugly and loathsome. This is not enough. Agni says: "This happens when one tries to kill a truthful person with untruth," and rips them apart, and kills then all their accomplices, supposedly also the king Asamāti. The story ends in the affirmation of the verse X.60.7.: it is said to kill one's adversaries and other crooked persons.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (I.1.4.14-17) does not have the king Asamāti or the Gaupāyana brothers. It has taken Kirāta and Ākuli as the protagonists. They have become

[1032] Thus according to Caland's translation. The manuscript has the form *kirātakulyau*, which could also mean "two from the family of Kirātakulyas".
[1033] The same one that was burned in the MBh by Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa.

the brahman priests of the asuras (demons). A voice that kills asuras and other foes has gone to a bull which is in possession of Manu, the first human king. So the two demons go to Manu in disguise and say that they will perform a sacrifice for him. They take the bull as the sacrificial victim and kill it. But the voice does not die but is transferred from the bull to the wife of Manu, and it is so strong that it crushes the demons. Now Kirāta and Ākuli conspire to perform another ritual, taking the wife as the sacrificial victim. The wife dies and the asura-killing voice leaves her. But it goes now to the sacrificial vessels and sounds every time a sacrifice is performed, and the two demon brothers are not able to take it away.[1034]

The variant of the *Bṛhaddevatā* follows the *Jaiminīya*, but snips the violent revenge away from the end. Therefore the figures of the king and Agni must be softened. The king is not cruel but thoughtless. He puts away his priests, that represent old decent Vedic religion, and takes Kirāta and Ākuli to his service without knowing that they are demons and evil, apparently because they make all kinds of new and fancy tricks that are mentioned in the *Jaiminīya*. It is not said why the demons hate the cowherd brothers: perhaps their sacrifice or piety hurts them, like the voice inside Manu's bull. I give this version in full, in spite of the string of Vedic quotations inside it. In the middle of narrative there is a passage that belongs to the informative frame, telling to which gods each hymn is addressed. It may also be noted that "the healing ceremony" with its use of successive hymns that refer to the revived person resembles the narrative of Śunaḥśepa from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.

7.83d-102.[1035]

The next hymn [beginning with] "*What*" (RV X.58), is connected to a story. Listen to me who have desire to tell it! [With the event] when he had lost consiousness from stupefaction, having been struck down by an enemy, the life-story of Subandhu is presented here, or [in that hymn] which praises the *Manas*.

King Asamāti of the race of Ikṣvāku, the Rathaproṣṭha, cast off his domestic priests, Bandhu and the rest, who are the seers of the Dvipadās in the *maṇḍala* of Atri.[1036] Two priests who were versed in magic, Kirāta and Ākuli: these Asamāti took as his domestic priests, because he thought that they were the best. These two priests changed themselves into pigeons and going against the Gaupāyanas fell upon Subandhu

[1034] Here the *manas* has become a voice, a divine instrument that kills demons. The demons try to kill it but do not succeed, as it finally settles on the sacrificial material, like the spirit of Subandhu (or all Gaupāyanas) in the other *Brāhmaṇa* versions. Here it is a good thing, making the sacrifice more potent and keeping evil spirits away.
[1035] My translation.
[1036] This refers to their place among the poet-seers of the *Ṛgveda*.

with their art of magic power and illusion. When he was attacked this way, he felt pain, and fainted and fell down. Then the two of them plucked out his spirit and returned to the king.
When Subandhu fell, and lost consciousness, the three brothers, all Gaupāyanas together, muttered an auspicious blessing: "*Let us not stray*..." etc (X.57.). To bring back his spirit they turned to the hymn: "*If that spirit of yours*..." etc. (X.58). And the next [hymn] they muttered for the purpose of remedies, "*Let the life be prolonged*..." etc. (X.59), this one of which the first triplet is the dispeller of Annihilation (*Nirṛti*).
(The three verses "*Do not give us up*..." etc. (X.59abc) belong to Soma, the next "May Nirṛti depart" etc. (X.59d) to Nirṛti, and the whole verse to Soma and Nirṛti. The next two verses praise Asunīti: "*Asunīti, give us back*..." etc. (X.59.5-6). Now in this [couplet] Yāska thinks that the last verse is addessed to Anumati. Earth. Sky, Soma, Pūṣan, Pathyā, and Svasti [are the deities] in the verse "*May earth restore*..." etc. (X.59.7)., [which is] traditionally known to be for calming Subandhu. The triplet [beginning] "*May the great heaven and earth*..." etc. (X.59.8-10) is to Rodaśī (the two worlds) and in the verse "*Send, Indra*..." etc. (X.59.10) the half-verse belongs to Indra.)
In that place [= in the presence of the king] they praised the two worlds for the purpose of destroying infirmity (*rapas*): this "infirmity" is intoxication caused by evil or a bodily distress. Then with the four verses [beginning] "*Bringing our homage*..." etc. (X.60.1-4) they praised the scion of Ikṣvākus. Having thus praised, they expressed their wish with the verse "*O Indra, maintain*... " etc. (X.60.5.). Their mother praised the king with [the verse] "*You yoke the two*..." etc. (X.60.6).
The king, having been praised, stood in front of the Gaupāyanas full of shame. In the manner of Atri, he also praised Agni with a dvipāda hymn (V.24), and Agni for his part said to them: "Here, within this sacrificial fencing is the spirit of Subandhu. Desiring the welfare [of both] I retain [the spirit] of Ikṣvāku." Calling back the spirit of Subandhu, the Purifier said: "Live!", and praised by the Gaupāyanas went pleased back to heaven.
With the hymn "*This mother of yours*..." etc. (X.60.7.), rejoicing, they fetched back the spirit of Subandhu. Pointing to the body of Subandhu, lying on the ground, they sang the rest of the hymn to revive his spirit. During the hymn "*This my hand is*..." etc. (X.60.12) they all touched him with their hands, and he came back to life.

The conscientious scholar Śaunaka has brought also the mother of the four brothers in the story, inspired by the Vedic verse beginning "*This mother of yours* (...) *has arrived*" (X.60.7.). She joins his three sons in praising the king: a generous gesture, as the king's decision to make the two demons his domestic priests is the root of the trouble. Agni spares the king, because he is now penitent. Even the two rogues escape punishment. They simply vanish from the text. It would not have suited the conciliatory ethos of this story to rip them apart. Perhaps the miracle of reviving the dead, greater than the magic trick of killing someone and sucking out his soul, has dissolved them.

This narrative does not have the vivacious drive of the *Jaiminīya* version. Violence and revenge are more colourful ingredients in a narrative than mercy and reconciliation. Nevertheless, it is significant how often the *Bṛhaddevatā* seeks concord in solving the problems inherent in the old stories. It does not propagate the absolute priority of rituals and seers and their power over the gods, like the *Brāhmaṇas* and Epics. Neither does it see the man as a helpless victim of divine whims. According to Laurie Patton, the narratives of the *Bṛhaddevatā* seek a common interest and mutual understanding between humans and gods that the composer evidently finds in Vedic hymns, and this is achieved by verbal means, by persuasion with words, not merely by ritual or ascesis.[1037] This is evident in the narrative of Subandhu. In this sense the work is both ancient and modern in its literary and ideological context. And it is important to notice that this position is affirmed not by a set of rules, but by narratives.

In her study on the *Bṛhaddevatā* Patton argues also for a new way to think about text types. She believes that its narratives operate in the same way as commentaries. "Unapologetically it [= the *Bṛhaddevatā*] uses narrative commentary as a way of making the text intelligible, and, more importantly, it places narrative commentary alongside of ritual, philosophical and grammatical commentary as a legitime form of canon-making.". And further, "(it) allows one to see narrative as a form of thought among other forms of thought (...)."[1038]

The practice to use narrative as a frame or a setting for a philosophical discussion in the *Upaniṣads* was discussed in the chapter 2.6., in connection with the concept of "the conversational frame". In the same chapter a proposition was made that ritual exegesis or philosophical inquiry can, in many cases, be read as a narrative. The didactic frame, often in a form of philosophical or ethical teaching or a conversation, was used in pre-classical literature by the Buddhists, as we saw in the previous chapter, and also by Jains in their instructive texts. Esposito has demonstrated that in the early Jain literature the didactic dialogue was "the best means to integrate all these various tales in a plausible way".[1039]

Preconceived notions about what qualifies as a frame need to be reconsidered. By mixing several types of texts — informative, argumentative, narrative — to form a coherent discourse on a chosen topic the composer of the *Bṛhaddevatā* proves that text types were not something that bothered an author in ancient India, and it might be asked

[1037] See Patton 1996: 253, 304, 325, 441-463.
[1038] Patton 1996: 448.
[1039] Esposito 2015: 96.

why should we, then, impose our rules and restrictions on their texts. Moreover, frames and embeddings do not have to be separated by marked boundaries to be frames and embeddings. They can alternate freely, flow into each other and feed each other. As seen in the examples above, in the narratives of the *Bṛhaddevatā* the exegetical frame, the embedded narrative and the second-level embedding of the Ṛgvedic verses build a dialogical and interactive whole.

The *Bṛhaddevatā* has not interested literary scholars, but both its recognition of the narrative content of the *Ṛgveda* and the use of narratives as commentary makes it an important work in the history of the Indian narrative.

3.6. The Epic model

I return here briefly to the Vedic model, discussed in the chapter 2.6. In it one can notice already the presence of a frame and an embedding. This is evident both in *Ṛgvedic* hymns and the narratives of the *Brāhmanas*. The mode of the analysis has formerly blocked these structures from sight. Most damaging has been the fixed idea that there should be a continuous frame with a narrator who is conscious of his position as a narrator, and who has a narratee who actively guides the narrative with questions and demands. The two outer frames of the MBh are like this, but it is not the only model for framing, and it was not something that appeared into the MBh from a void, or as a revelation when they thought about the Vedic rituals ("hey, we could use this structure also to tell a story which has another story inside!").

First, the self-conscious narrator is present already in the Vedic hymns and in the *Brāhmaṇas*. In the former it is the poet-seer-narrator talking to a narratee (the god or fellow-worshippers) as the composer of the hymn, or assuming a *persona* of somebody else. In the latter it is the "exegetical narrator" who in the frame invites other authorities to a discussion about the details of the ritual and then quotes a narrative which he then provides with comments and connections with the rite and the Vedic *mantras*. The inability to perceive these narrators arises from the traditional un-literary way these texts have been read. Also "the conversational frame", discussed in 2.5., should be looked at from a new angle. The exegetical frame of the *Brāhmaṇas* is of this type, the *Upaniṣads*

present another variant, and the "Dharma" section of the MBh and the *Bṛhaddevatā* are the inheritors of this model in the Epic age. In it the frame takes the form of argumentation which most often means conversation between two characters about some "serious" issue. One or both of the characters then tell narratives to support their views. It is exactly this model that was adapted for the frame stories of the *Pañcatantra* cycle, as was seen in the chapter 2.6. Not much happens plotwise in the frame stories of the five books of the *Pañcatantra*, nor in the "Dharma" section or the "pilgrimage" interludes of the MBh: they are all discussions between the characters with embedded narratives told by one of them. So it is not logical to dismiss the frame of the *Brāhmaṇas* as a non-frame.

The presence of this model, along with the consistent habit of putting both Vedic verses and Vedic narratives inside a new discourse and retelling and embellishing them further in literary texts,[1040] was more than enough to give the composers of the MBh ideas about framing. It was necessary for them to use this kind of system, because they wanted to include so many stories inside the MBh, both to give the main narrative background and to preserve the best myths and legends that were around at the time of composing.

This does not mean that the composers of the MBh were not innovative. They developed the idea of the frame further. They realized that frame could be used as a preface which could contain a summary of the work ("a list of contents") and information about the genesis of the work, its author and its importance. This is exactly what the modern prefaces and introductions contain. In ancient Indian context it meant also advertising, and giving a guarantee of the old age, the merit and the authority of the work. The oldest and most authoritative literature was the Veda, so Vedic seers, narratives and rituals were all put into the text, although its message was new: the importance of *dharma* and the propagation of the cult of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa.

Another novelty was a real-life narrative situation which included an active narratee. This can also be seen as reshaping of the conversational frame which proceeds with interactive discussion and dispute. But the composers of the MBh used it also to give structure to the massive text with myriads of narratives. Repetition is a great aid to memory, so the same story was told three times: first by a summary, then giving the back-stories, then narrating the full story (see the Diagram 7b on p. 206). These stages were marked in the text by the comments of the narratee. Both the narrator and the narratee could also summarise or anticipate in other places, acting like "titles" and "descriptive

[1040] Here also the habit of piling commentaries after commentaries around an old authoritative text must be mentioned. This happened in Vedic sciences, in philosophy, in grammar and other sciences as well.

summaries" which were used by 19th century Western novelists. This continuous discussion in the frame mimics also a real-life storytelling situation which is common in all cultures.

A third new discovery was the possibility of multiplying the frames. The two outer frames of the MBh already give the text three narrative levels, and the embedded narratives of the main narrative add a fourth level. There are some fifth-level narratives also, as in the *Pañcatantra*, which is famous for its multiple levels. But in the MBh it already can be noticed that maintaining all the frames throughout the text is hard work, and easily leads to a mess. Therefore the F(I), "the preface", is present only in the beginning[1041], like the outer frame of the *Pañcatantra*, and the F(II) with Vaiśaṃpāyana as the narrator and Janamejaya as the narratee functions in practice as the outer frame. Even F(II) was bothersome to uphold all the time, so in the extra-long "War" and "Dharma" embeddings it was put aside. In the *Āraṇyakaparvan* there is a careful balance between dramatic episodes, narrated by Vaiśaṃpāyana, and the more peaceful oases of embedded narratives which are narrated by various seers.

Still, the frames dominate the MBh, and its structural complexity was repeated by its appendix (*khila*), the *Harivaṃśa*[1042] and the huge mass of the *Purāṇas*. They all can said to belong to the *itihāsa-purāṇa* genre which the MBh began and established. The *Harivaṃśa*, which deals with the history of Kṛṣṇa (Hari) and his clan, is a transitional text between the MBh and the *Purāṇas*. It has three books, arranged within the same double frame structure as the MBh. Both F(I) and F(II) of the work have the same narrators as the MBh, and the same pattern of question and answer by which the narrative proceeds. The embeddings within F(II) follow the model set by the MBh in the *Āraṇyakaparvan*. Many of the narrators and stories of the MBh are repeated.

The *Purāṇas*[1043] use the structural grid of the MBh in different ways, but again, the adherence of the outer frames and narrators of the model is evident. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* the outer frame (I) consists of a dialogue between the *Sūta* (the Bard Ugraśravas)

[1041] I think that the short passage that closes the F(I) in the end is mechanical and not meaningful, because there is no narratee.

[1042] The *Harivaṃśa* ("The Genealogy of Hari (Viṣṇu)") has 16374 couplets and follows chronologically the MBh (1st century- 4th century CE, some parts earlier). The subject is the prehistory of the heroes in the MBh, the Solar and Lunar dynasties and the ancestry of Kṛṣṇa. See Couture (1996), Brinkhaus (2002) and Söhnen-Thieme (2005 and 2009). An English translation was made by Manmatha Nath Dutt in 1897.

[1043] The *Purāṇas* have oral roots in the early Epic age but they became fixed much later (3rd to 10th centuries CE). There are 18 major P:s (*Mahāpurāṇa*) and 18 minor P:s (*Upapurāṇa*). They deal with the mythologies of particular gods and their relation to the Vedic and Epic characters. See Rocher 1986.

and Śaunaka.[1044] The author of the work is given in the outer frame: it is Vyāsa, who features again as the ultimate source of the Bard's narrative, even though the occasion where the Bard has heard what he is about to narrate is an actual dialogue between Vyāsa's son Śuka and king Parīkṣit, who prepares to die.

The Bard narrates the story of Parikṣit. Inside the outer frame there is embedding with another narrator: Śuka teaches Parikṣit. This, in turn, becomes a frame (IIa), when dialogues between other characters are quoted by Śuka. The frame (IIa) is interrupted by the outer frame (I) once to introduce another embedding (IIb), a dialogue between the seer Maitreya and Vidura. Inside the the embeddings of the IIa there are some dips to the next (fourth) level of narration. At the end there is a coda, containing a report about the death of Parikṣit and a *phalastuti* ("praise of the benefit").[1045]

The adoption of the frame to the *kāvya* genre can first be seen in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which uses simpler framing and integrated speaker's captions. Those texts which did not have a strong central narrative but were born as collections of diverse stories (*kathā* or *ākhyāna*) could be framed by different ways. An early example are the *Jātakas*: there is one simple frame with one narrator. The secular story collections favoured multiple frames, but they were used in a more systematical and unified way than in the MBh. This development can be seen in the versions of the *Pañcatantra* and the *Bṛhatkathā*.

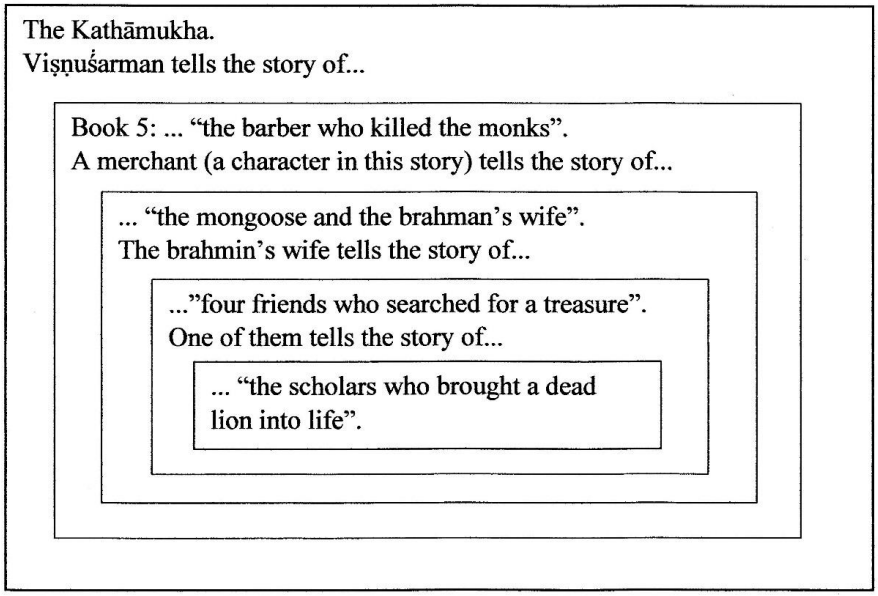
For comparison to the MBh, I include an example that illustrates the structure of the *Pañcatantra* ("Five treatises"). It is taken from a late version by Pūrṇabhadra (1199 CE). In short, the work has an outer frame (*kathāmukha*, "the opening of the story": see p. 43), in which "the author" is introduced. He is a wise old man called Viṣṇuśarman, and it is told that his work is originally composed to educate three dull-witted princes. His work consists of five books which teach worldly wisdom. In them the characters tell embedded stories which may include further narrators and stories. The *kathāmukha* is a one-sided frame (a preface, as the name says), but the frames of the five books are all sustained frames with narrators and active narratees just as the outer frames of the MBh.

The theme of the fifth book is "Ill-consided action": usually the frame story is "The brahman and the mongoose" which has also travelled to Europe ("the faithful god Gelert"[1046]), but in this version it is one of the embedded stories, and the frame story is a

[1044] For a detailed analysis of the structure of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* see Söhnen-Thieme 2015.
[1045] See the diagrams in Söhnen-Thieme 2015: 310, 313, 329-331. - *Phalastuti* refers to the benefits from the hearing of the text that has been just recited.
[1046] This is the name of the best-known western version that has circulated in Wales from the Middle Ages.The idea is that a faithful animal (a mongoose in India and a dog in Europe) is left by its master to

new one ("The barber who killed the monks"). There are five vertical narrative levels present and four narrators, plus the general narrator. The *kathāmukha* is here the outer frame, although Viṣṇuśarman is not an overt narrator with a narrative situation. But he is more than an author, because the princes did not read his work but listened to him as he read it. This regular "box" structure shown below is familiar to the readers of the *Thousand and One Nights*.[1047]

Diagram 18. The structure of the *Pañcatantra*



The *Daśakumāracarita* ("The adventures on ten princes") of Daṇḍin (8th century CE) is a moderate variant in the classical vein, with a clear frame narrative and different first-person narrators on a horizontal level for each embedded narrative — this is similar to the structure of the *Decameron*.

But these works, from the *Pañcatantra* onwards, are another story.[1048]

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guard a child in a cradle, and a predatory animal (a snake in India and a wolf in Europe) invades the house. The faithful animal kills the attacker after a terrible fight, but when the master returns and is greeted at the door by the guardian animal, s/he misinterprets its blood-soaked state and kills it. Then s/he goes inside, sees the unharmed child and the corpse of the predator and realizes what has happened.

[1047] See p. 40.

[1048] As said in the beginning, I hope to complete the history of the frame in Indian literature in the future by a study of the frames in the Classical age.

In the following two diagrams the two parallel models of the Epic age are given. The 19 shows the Epic model which is a multiplying frame. It is typical of the more complex versions that the outermost frame contains information about the original author and, optionally, also backstories of the text or its narratives. The conversational model (20), inherited from the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* and present in the "Dharma" section of the MBh and in the *Bṛhaddevatā*, is quite versatile: the frame can be an argumentative text which envelops a narrative, or a narrative text which frames an argumentation. This too can be multiplied like the Vedic model: F(I) (argumentation: information, summary) > F(II) (narrative) > the "Dharma" frame (argumentation) > embedded narratives.

Diagram 19. The Epic model

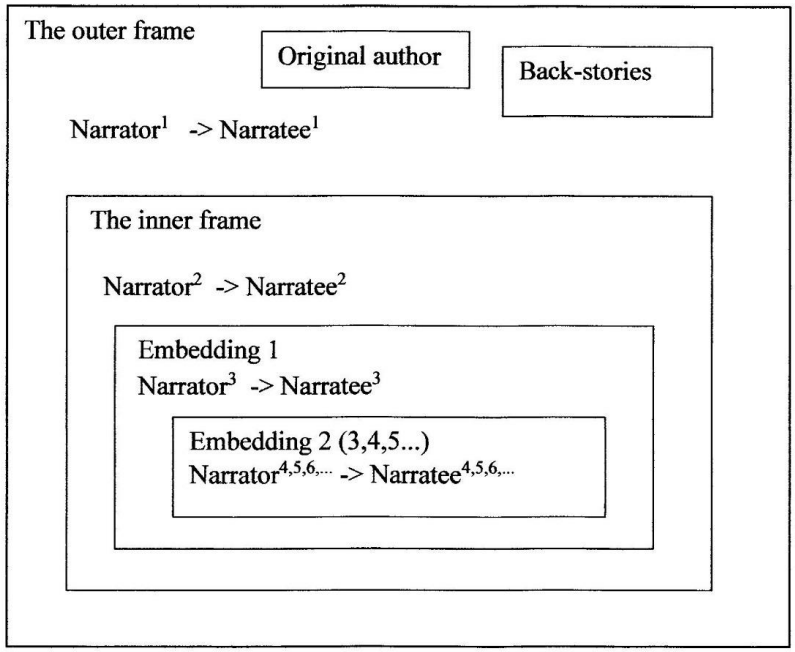
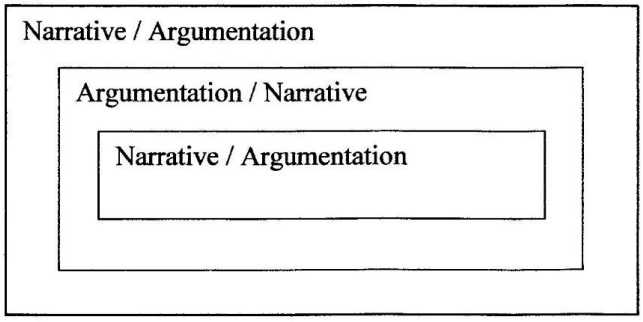


Diagram 20. The conversational frame.



Of the afterlife of the two epics it may be noted that also they both went through the mill of endless recycling, though in different ways. The main plot of the Rām° was adapted to write the first literary works in many vernacular languages, but the contents of the MBh were reused by cutting the work into parts. Even the main narrative was too much for the retellers. So it was used as an inventory of episodes, narratives and scenes. The classical poet Kālidāsa took the ancestor of the protagonists from the back-tales of the major book 1 for the heroine for his most famous drama *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (5th century CE), which pares off the cruelty of the original story to narrate a poignant romance. The early playwright Bhāṣa (ca. 3rd century CE) chose the climatic duel of Bhīma and Duryodhana to write a short tragedy *Ūrubhaṅga* ("The Breaking of the Thigh"), and episodes such as the fight of Arjuna and the Mountain man and the slaying of the king Śiśupāla by Kṛṣṇa could be developed into major courtly epics such as Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya* (6th century CE) and Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* (8th century CE). Even the story of Nala was too long, and Śrīharṣa (12th century CE) chose only a part of it to compose his *Naiṣadhacarita*, stopping at the marriage of the hero and the heroine.

The minor episodes of the MBh became the standard repertoire of the later *bharatanatyam* and *kathakali* dramas, not to mention all the versions in local languages in India and in South Asia. In this way the treasure of old tales that had been collected in the MBh dispersed again in the later literature, just as had happened a thousand years earlier, when the treasure of "floating mass" of narratives that was gathered in the

fragments in the Vedic hymns spread out and bloomed in the multitude of retellings of the *Brāhmaṇas*, the MBh and other works.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study started by searching the frame from the earliest surviving literature of India, the *Ṛgveda*, analysed the the narratives of the *Brāhmaṇas*, paused shortly to glance at the *Upaniṣads* and delved then deep into the *Mahābhārata*, to come again nearer to surface by comparing this huge "frame-story of all frame-stories" with some contemporary or successor works. The aim was, first, to find, describe and analyse the frame structures and their apparatus (levels, narrators, narratees, narrative situations) of representative works during the time span of the first thousand years before the beginning of the classical age of Sanskrit literature. I believe that this has been done to a satisfactory measure, and the results have been laid out both in the diagrams which illustrate the analyses, and in the concluding chapters that discuss the texts, or as it concerns the two periods (Vedic and Epic), models or variants of models of the frames that have been in literary use. Much material had to be left aside, because even a scratch on the surface takes this long: the old Indian literature is a real horn of plenty.

Naturally the Vedic and Epic models have been simplified for the purposes of this study, but they are informative and helpful in (i) defining the basic structures that have dominated this literary form in each period[1049] and in (ii) making comparisons to build a history of the frame. The conversational model does not belong only to the epic age but covers also half of the earlier period, being applicable for the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* and other works as well. It is really "a master model" of the whole period on a higher level, or a proposal to look at the structures of texts in an unconventional way. It is important to realize how often we may, without any conscious intention, measuring old literature by later standards. The separateness of "fact" and "fiction" has long dominated the literary and cultural studies, as well as the dichotomies of high and low, oral and written, and secular and sacred. One of the agendas of this study has been to give old texts a fair chance. It is not sound to search for pure forms and definite boundaries from a literature that is in the making or does not care about "purity of forms", and when these are not found, to conclude that there are no forms or structures. The hybrid texts of the

[1049] Here it must be noted again that in regard to the *Ṛgveda* the model is very tentative, as it is impossible to define a structure that would common to all or even most of the hymns. Even so, I believe it pays off to single out a group of hymns that share a regular structure, all the more as it shows clear kinship with the frame structure.

late Vedic period should be approached in a different way. It is exactly the mixture which is interesting. It reveals much better than "the pure forms" how the literary modes, genres and text types evolved and developed.

This theoretical openness was needed while pursuing the second major aim of the study, which was to trace the development of literary framing and find evidence to confirm that there was a continuity of the use of this literary technique from the early specimens to the full flourishing of the frame. Most important was to find frames in the Vedic literature. As it was mentioned in the preceding chapter, this material had been long a victim of scholarly conventions. New winds have been blowing in the study of the epics and the *Purāṇas*, but the progress has been slower in the area of Vedic literature. For many reasons the hymns and especially the *Brāhmaṇas* have rarely been treated as literary texts and even more rarely analysed with methods of modern literary research. The narratives in the *Brāhmaṇas* have awakened interest but the texts have not been subject of a literary study *as unities*. The exegesis and the narratives have been taken to be separate, connected only by the subject matter: the ritual. In this way the possibility of the presence of frame, or a continuity between the "quoting a story" in the Ṛgvedic hymns and "quoting a Ṛgvedic *mantra* and a story" in the *Brāhmaṇas*, has been brushed aside. To open a new route, I have in this study approached this material with a narratological toolbox. It does not do to define "narrative" and "frame" only by personal intuition and build a theory on that, as has been done so far.

Especially the theories of Schmid, Nelles and Fludernik have been helpful in finding and analysing the narrators in the Vedic texts and also in summoning the courage to propose a wider definition the frame and embedding than the usual "narrative inside another narrative", namely "a narrative inside another text". Because in the early Indian literary world narratives were not preserved as such, there was simply no option in which the frame could have been a narrative. But narratives could be embedded inside other texts, and it was done so often that this process cannot be ignored. I venture to say that there is hardly another literary culture which has from the beginning so faithfully preserved and cherished the old, and the most effective way to do this was to enclose it inside the new. Indian literature developed by recycling old texts, old narratives and old motifs.

In presenting "the Vedic model" in 2.6. I drew attention to the variants of the framing strategies in the earliest examples. To begin with, if the is a myth or a narrative connected to the deity, it is usually referred to in the middle section of the hymn. The

simplest form is used in I.32., in which the poet-narrator tells the myth of Indra and Vṛtra. It can be seen, however, that there is a continuum between this type and the variants where in the middle there is a riddle or a mystery, a list of the deeds of the deity, or the voice of another speaker, quoted by the poet-seer-narrator. The most complex of hymns have a series of concentric layers around the core narrative with a change of point-of-view or the tone of the speaker in each layer. These have been called *omphalos* hymns. Already in them can be seen the formation of a series of the type C-B-A-B-C, in which the most personal narrative (or the mystery or the riddle) is the "A" in the middle.

A special group is formed by the monologue and dialogue hymns, which the early commentators named already as *itihāsas*, histories or stories. This estimation was reaffirmed by later authors who treated them like narratives. In these hymns the embedded narrative that is presented by the speech of the character(s), dominates the whole, and the frame of the poet-seer-narrator-commentator is placed there where it is needed. I have suggested that those third-person stanzas that display an outsider's attitude could be interpreted as spoken by the narrator. In these hymns it would replace the ordinary frame which in other texts provides the narrative situation and its background. It could even be a remnant of an old commentary that accompanied the verses. But this is a conjecture which should be backed with clearer evidence.

The position of the Vedic narrator-poet is amorphic. The poet-seers may present themselves as narrators and/or name the god as the narratee, but this is not always the case. The circle of the worshippers and sacrificers may also act as narratees, or the poet-seers may adopt the voice of the god, or they may hide behind an impersonal voice, as in the philosophical hymns and formulaic parts of the *omphalos* hymns, or they may lend their voice to their characters, as in the monologue and dialogue hymns. Still, there is always a speaker and his audience in the Ṛgvedic text, as in all texts, even if they are covert.

In the *Brāhmaṇas* the prose narrative steps forth. However, there had to be a connection to the religion and ritual to justify the place of the narrative inside the tradition. The *Brāhmaṇas* solved this problem ingeniously. As the narratives were taken from the Ṛgvedic material, the Ṛgvedic verses could act as a grid on which the new narrative material was added. So for the two Sāmavedic *Brāhmaṇas* there was a *sāman* (a chant set in the Vedic verses) that the protagonist would "see" in a critical moment of the plot. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* a suitable ritual would be chosen to fit the narrative. Witzel has proposed that the reform of the rituals was the reason for the retelling and combination of

different motifs in the narrative of Cyavana. This is very probable, but the process of combining and retelling was textual and literary.

This literary reworking of many different items is seen in the narrative of Śunaḥśepa, which consists of several sections and has a concentric structure. The various components in it could have been put together because a common theme, such as fathers and sons and rebirth, as in the conglomeration of the stories of Jantu, Aṣṭāvakra and Yavakrīta in the *Vanaparvan* of the MBh. The ritual context (*rājasūya*) hints in this direction. But maybe the bits were put together simply because they make such a dramatic plot when combined. The normal procedure seems to be that a certain narrative germ in the *Ṛgveda*, which looks promising, is developed to a full tale, like in the narratives of Dīrghajihvī and Subandhu. Some of the early reworkings became popular and were recycled time after time.

The *Mahābhārata*, as stated in the chapter 3.6., had this rich tradition to build on, but it developed the frame further to a direction that had a great influence to the later story collections. The multiple framing and the multiple narrators offered all kinds of possibilities, but the danger was that the audience would be lost in the maze. To prevent this the composers of the MBh resorted to multiple repetition, which is shown in the discussion about the "tripartite narrative structure". A part of this structure was "the preface/ introduction" and the figure of "the Author" provided by F(I).

The theory of the development of the frame presented in this study has been constructed also to challenge "the ritual model" of the frame, suggested in an article by Witzel and developed in two articles of Minkowski. As this explanation looks attractive, it has been widely accepted and circulated. However, the evidence of the theory is build on the presuppositions of what is "a frame" and "a narrator", and these have blotted out the wide range of frames that have been used before the MBh. The alternative history of the frame is presented in the first part of the study and the counter-evidence summarized in the chapter 2.4.

Another presupposition has been that the presence of the *sattras* in the plot of F(I) and F(II) in the MBh proves that also the structures of the *sattras* have been copied into the MBh and, thus the ritual structures are "the original model of the frame story in India". In the chapter 3.4. I have countered this hypothesis, pointing out that the narrative situation of the MBh is not based on formulas used in *sattras* but oral storytelling situation and its simulation, which suits perfectly the narrative strategy of the epic. It can also be shown that the composers of the MBh show very little interest in their text for the

structures of the *sattra* or any ritual. It is most probable that the mythical 12-year *sattra* was chosen for the setting of F(I) because it was so immensely long: the MBh could not be recited in the breaks of any other ritual. Also it is most probable that *sarpasattra* was chosen for the F(II) because the composers needed a subversive ritual to point out that Janamejaya's sacrifice was as reprehensible as the war of the Bhāratas. The violence and the dramatic elements in the "plot" of the *sattra* are likely to have attracted the composers of the MBh. As in the *rājasūya*, it was the dramatic elements of the ritual plot that were taken to build the plot — not the structure — of the MBh.[1050]

Everything relevant for the knowledge about the early history of the frame in India could naturally not be covered in this study. In the future it would be expedient to survey all the details of the mechanisms by which the old works have built their frame structures and cover larger patches of material, especially from the Vedic texts. Here, because the time scale is wide, it has been necessary to make a selection of the texts that best illustrate the discussion, to concentrate on basic structures and their changes, and to treat the texts as synchronic and homogenic. A more thorough investigation of the building blocks and processes of individual texts will be valuable for the general history and study of the frames.

This may mean opening up again the discussion (and the dispute) between the "genetic/analytic" and "synthetic/hermeneutic" schools of study, especially in the case of the MBh. Even so, it would be useful to sketch hypotheses for the growth of multiple frames in each case and try to find evidence to back them. There are two basic models: "from-outside-in" (adding an embedded narrative to a text) and "from-inside-out" (adding a frame around a narrative). Many theorists have proposed that in the MBh the frame structure spread first in and then out, so that the embedded narratives inside the main plot, such as those in the *Āraṇyakaparvan*, gave the idea to construct frames also outside the main plot. It is possible, though it is not easy to prove it by the evidence of the present (and rather unanimously agreed) form of the MBh, where F(I) and F(II) are integrated to the whole. In addition, there are not only short, independent embeddings, but two large frames ("The War" and "The Dharma") inside the main story: it is hard to imagine the long central narrative of the battle to be differently constructed and narrated.

In addition, both schemes, "from-inside-out" and "from-outside-in", had been used before. In the *omphalos* and dialogue hymns in the *Ṛgveda* the core/embedding

[1050] The mixing up of "plot" and "structure" is evident in the "ritual model".

came probably first, and it was given a frame. In the *Brāhmaṇas* there was first a frame (exegesis), and stories were embedded in it: this involved reshaping the narrative and even inventing most of it. In more complex stories, like those of Cyavana and Śunaḥśepa, the process of combining different stories to make one coherent tale has required both framing and embedding. The ambition to create "The Great Story"[1051] must have inspired the composers of the present MBh to add layers both upwards and downwards.

Stuart Blackburn, in observing patterns in Indian oral epics, says that the general principle for growth of an oral epic is the expansion of the core story by a. embedding independent narratives and b. accumulating similar motifs.[1052] Thus, the growth "from-inside-out" would happen only in later stages. Looking at these examples one could form a hypothesis: a narrative that has embeddings attracts also outer frames. And if a narrative or a collection of narratives is put into a new context, it may gather both new frames and new embeddings. When the *Pañcatantra* was translated into Middle Persian, it acquired a new frame and a new structure, and when this work was translated into Arabic, new tales were added and a preface about the Persian translator Burzōy was written to provide the outermost frame. In his way the frames of the new *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* did not narrate only the history of the genesis of the work but also the history of its translation and its voyage to the west.

There is still much to be done in this field. I hope that the present study has both provided information about the history and development of early frame narratives in India in such a form that will be useful not only to scholars of South Asian studies but also those of comparative literature. I also wish that the propositions about the early forms of structure and the conversational frame would widen the perspective of the studies of Indian literature.

[1051] Many Sanskrit works have "big" titles and most of these have indeed very many pages. There is *Bṛhaddevatā* ("The Great (Collection) of Stories about Gods", the subject of the chapter 3.5.3., and among the shortest of the "greats"), *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* ("The Great Compendium", a scientific encyclopaedia written by Varāhamihira in the 6th c. CE) and *Mahāvastu* ("The Big History", a biographical encyclopaedia of the Buddha, 2nd c. BCE - 4th c. CE). To these one may add Guṇāḍhya's lost collection of framed stories, *Bṛhatkathā*, "The Great Story", and its successor *Kathāsaritsāgara* ("The Ocean of the Rivers of Stories": the English translation extends to 10 volumes). The composers of the *Mahābhārata* ("The Big (Story) of the Bhārata (War)") hoped undoubtedly to collect everything even remotely relevant inside one big Behemoth of a story.

[1052] Blackburn 1989: 16-17.

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